SOME PLAIN SERMONS

KELLY

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BY

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ARGUE, OBSECRA, INCREPA

ST. LOUIS, MO., 1911
PUBLISHED BY B. HERDER
17 SOUTH BROADWAY
FREIBURG (BADEN) GERMANY | LONDON, W. C. 68, GREAT RUSSELL STREET

NIHIL OBSTAT.

Sti. Ludovici, die 28 Febr., 1911

F. G. HOLWECK,

Censor Librorum.

IMPRIMATUR.

Sti. Ludovici, die 11 Aprilis, 1911

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Archiepiscopus Sti. Ludovici.

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
EMMET LEE FARRELL
A GRADUATE OF THE MOUNTAIN IN 1892
AND OF GEORGETOWN LAW SCHOOL
WHO DIED AT HIS HOME
IN
BLACKVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA
FEBRUARY 20TH, 1895

I taught him Thucydides,
He was the very pink of courtesy.
He died as he had lived—fearing God
Amice, vivas in Deo semper.
Amen.

✠

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K29

FOREWORD

These sermons, or homilies, written by me when editor of the "Providence Visitor," were urged by my brethren of the diocese of Providence, as deserving of publication in a book form. I was about to print them, when I was smitten by a well-nigh fatal stroke of traumatic paralysis. I was going from the rectory to the church, on Sunday morning early, the fourteenth of December, 1902, in the performance of my duty, as parish priest of the Assumption, Providence, Rhode Island, when I fell backwards down the steps. The night had been stormy and I was very careful that morning. I had my chalice-box in my left hand and the announcement-book in my right. When I struck the icy walk I fainted with pain; but just before I fainted, I felt something give way in the left side of my brain. After a little while, I came back to my senses, realized what had happened, got up, brushed the snow from my cassock,

went over to the church, said the two Masses and preached the last sermon I shall likely ever preach.

All through the week I felt queer. On Thursday I sent for the doctor. The doctor pronounced it a bad cold. I was to stay in over Sunday. I *had* to go out to the church that Sunday evening, as the Reverend Dr. Lennon was to preach before my Holy Name Society. He died six months later and may God give him rest — Amen. I played the organ at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

After counting the money taken in for Sunday, I retired. I woke up the next morning paralyzed. I could not help myself. At last, my curate found me. In the course of the forenoon Father Stang, afterward the first Bishop of Fall River, and now dead, gave me the last sacraments.

Here are some aspects of my case. I could not speak for two years. I had to learn my a, b, c, over again. I could not add two and two for the life of me. I write now with my left hand. I could not read my Breviary for upwards of five years. Thanks be to God, I can read it now. I cannot say Mass. Things got so unpleasant, that I resigned my parish two years ago. Now that I can speak, at last, is a comfort not to be described.

It is eight years, the twenty-second of last December, since I fell a victim to paralysis.

THOMAS L. KELLY.

Warren, Rhode Island,
St. Patrick's Day,
March 17, 1911.

SOME PLAIN SERMONS

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Each day brings us nearer to the Lord's coming and blessed are they who, when He appears, will be ready to meet Him. "The time makes haste to come" when God will judge his people, and this is the solemn thought in which the Church would have us meditate on to-day. Another year has passed from the short space, in which we are to work out our salvation. Sunday after Sunday we have been exhorted in the words of Christ and His apostles concerning the duties incumbent on us as children of the light and heirs of the Kingdom of God. The yearly round of feasts and fasts is now complete and, once again, we stand on the threshold of the Advent season, during which we are to meditate upon the consummation and end of things, to examine how far the year now closing has availed unto eternity, and to take the resolutions which faith in the meaning of death and the awful prospects of the judgment which follows death, urges upon us.

Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,

says the Apostle to the Ephesians, and this is his command to the Romans, yea, and to all who have been chosen to share the lot of the saints in light. Know ye, he says, that the hour has come to be awakened from sleep. This sleep of which he speaks is sinful indulgence and indifference about the one thing necessary. We have been busy with many things during the past year, our worldly affairs have prospered, we have made provision against old age and helplessness, but, brethren, what have we done for God and eternity? What provision have we made meanwhile against the day of the coming of the Lord? Perhaps we have only added to that record of sin too long already, with which, to our confusion, we shall be confronted on our departure out of this life. Once in a while these thoughts come to us, but they are promptly put aside. We persuade ourselves that there is time enough for that sort of thing by and by — as if the future were ours — and we hope to obtain the reward exceeding great which God has promised to those who love Him and keep His commandments by offering to Him the ashes of an ill-spent life. If to-day, brethren, you hear the voice of the Lord calling you to repentance and amendment, harden not your hearts. Let yourselves realize, for once, what life means and what your destiny is. Look into your con-

sciences honestly and carefully, and, see whether you are fulfilling that destiny or disregarding it.

After all, brethren, the service of God is the great concern of life. Some years ago we were not here. Some years hence men will know us no more. Whence did we come, why are we here, whither are we going? God made us, we did not make ourselves. He made us to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this life and by so doing to merit for ourselves the life to come eternal in the Heavens. How we are to serve Him He has made known to us by His Church, through which, as from the lips of Our Redeemer, we learn the great truths of salvation. One of these truths is that faith, vital and fundamental as it is, will not save us. Our faith must be the rule of our lives. Jesus Christ has warned us against the insufficiency of faith without good works in a memorable saying, " Not everyone that saith to me, ' Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. It is God's will that we avoid evil and do good. Let us not try to justify our contumacy in sin by citing the principle that God is good and merciful. He is good but He demands goodness from us, and His mercy is upon them that fear Him, not upon those who abuse his patience. Passion is

strong, the world has its own comfortable theory of life, and the devil is unwearied in his efforts to win us for himself; but God, who wills our salvation, holds out to us the means to obtain it. Remember that I said we must do good. There is a parable in the 13th chapter of St. Luke which is appropriate to this time — the parable of the barren fig tree — which the Master of the Vineyard, after seeking fruit from it for years, orders to be cut down. It is not enough to abstain from sins which bring opprobrium upon us from the point of view of worldly men, and to flatter ourselves that because we have never given public scandal, and have never served time in prison, we are ripening for the Kingdom of God. Christian virtue means far more than keeping within the bounds of human decency. "No man," says Jesus Christ, "cometh to the Father save by Me." We must, after His command, deny ourselves — do many things that are hard to flesh and blood — fight the good fight of faith from the dawn of reason to our latest conscious moment. We are the servants of God entrusted by Him with certain duties. Woe be to us if, when we are called to give an account of our lives, we shall be found to have been unprofitable servants. We are soldiers of Jesus Christ pledged to contend under the standard

of the cross against the world, the flesh and the devil. Woe be to us if, when the long day's fight is done, it shall appear that we were skulkers or deserters. Christ has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me."

These reflections are familiar enough to us whom the Apostle calls the children of the light. Let us no longer try to find excuses for our sins and shortcomings, but, rather, remembering that judgment is near, cast off the works of darkness and live as beseems the sons of God. Heed the words of the Apostle in to-day's lesson, if perhaps they touch you, even as Augustine heeded them when he read them fifteen centuries ago, and so put an end to his shame. Put aside the promptings of passion, of impurity, of gluttony, of envy, of sloth, of human respect, of avarice, of pride, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the pattern to which we must conform. And we must not merely imitate His blessed example but represent him in our conduct. "Let His conduct, His virtues and His spirit shine forth in you," says St. Augustine, "so that He may be remembered where you are seen."

And that you may be able, brethren, to live in this way, fail not to make use of the means at your disposal. The life of grace cannot be maintained without recourse to prayer and to the Sacraments.

Be diligent in prayer; whatever you do, do it according to the command of the Apostle, for the glory of God; for, without such consecration, the most heroic acts have no value in God's sight. Draw near to Jesus Christ now and again, in the Blessed Eucharist. From Him, alone, the fountain of living waters, will your souls, weary of the spiritual conflict, find strength to persevere faithful to the end.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Some very practical considerations are suggested by the prayer of St. Paul in the fifth verse of today's Lesson. "I beg God," he says, "the source of patience and consolation, to grant you perfect concord and unanimity, such concord as becomes the followers of Jesus Christ." Mutual concord is the gift of God, but the faithful ought to coöperate with divine grace for the obtaining and the preservation of it. There had been unbecoming dissensions among the Roman Christians. Some who had been converted from Judaism, could not bring themselves to look upon their Gentile brethren as their equals in the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, some of the Gentile converts were inclined to despise such of their Jewish brethren as persisted in fidelity to

the law of Moses. The greater part of this Epistle to the Romans is, accordingly devoted to the setting forth of Christian Truth so as to remove all stumbling blocks out of the way of both. And then, not content with bringing them to unity of belief, he exhorts them to be of one mind, one towards another. Christian love ought to animate the possessors of Christian truth, and there are few matters of Christian practice about which the Scriptures speak more frequently or more plainly than this. "Be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," says St. Paul to the Ephesians. "Love one another with the charity of brotherhood," is his message to the Romans. "God is not the God of dissension, but of peace," is His admonition to the quarrelsome Corinthians. "Love the brotherhood," says St. Peter. Now the exhortations are as timely to-day as when they were first uttered. Men are as prone to pride and self-sufficiency to-day as they were in the Apostolic age.

On the other hand, men are as sensitive to the slights and incivilities in which pride and self-sufficiency find expression as they ever were. Human nature is much the same from generation to generation. It is only when the law of Christ becomes the law of life that we find the perfect man — the man who mindful of his own many defects, has

compassion on the infirmities of others, not seeking his own pleasure or satisfaction, but doing all he can to promote peace and good-will among his brethren.

As an example for the Romans to follow in this duty of bearing with the shortcomings of others and not pleasing themselves, St. Paul points to Jesus Christ who sought our advantage at the cost of great humiliations. Note that the Apostle bids each one please his neighbor unto edification. It may sometimes happen, as he says in the Epistle to the Galatians, that when we strive to please men we cease to be the servants of Christ. It is evident that the honesty of trying to please others depends on the character of the opinions and acts to which we seek to accommodate ourselves. Unprincipled complaisance in the neighbor's evil doings would be sinful. But to return to the example of Christ of which St. Paul speaks,— "It was open to Him," St. John Chrysostom says, "not to bear reproaches and not to suffer what He did suffer, had he chosen to regard His own feelings; but these He would not regard. He regarded our interest and neglected His own." He took no advantage of His divine power. "Having," as the Apostle says, "joy set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame," and so redeemed us.

St. Paul goes on to state the reason of his prayer for concord among the Romans, viz., that with one mind and one mouth they may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so advance God's Kingdom among men. Of course the Apostle has in mind forms of dissension which do not concern us to-day. What Catholics must do or must avoid in the fulfillment of the duties of external religion is now clearly understood. But there are other forms of dissension against which we need to guard — those which are the outcome of disregard of brotherly charity — that charity which is patient and kind, which dealeth not perversely, which is not puffed up, which seeketh not her own and is not provoked to anger, which believeth all things, hopeful when she can no longer believe and when she can neither believe nor hope, endureth all things. Brethren, we worship the same God, we have all entered into His Church by the same gate of Baptism, we all eat of the same spiritual food, we have the same hope of obtaining it, we all look forward to the possession of Heaven. Why then are there so many dissensions, evils, jealousies among us, whereby outsiders are scandalized? Why is it that neighbors, nay, even children of the same father and mother treat each other as enemies, or, at least deny each other the ordinary

signs of civility? Dissension has ever been the vice of our race and neither the experience of two thousand years, nor the teachings of our Church has been able to fully cure us of it. If we cannot have our own way, right or wrong, we are inclined to see that those who oppose us shall not have things altogether their own way. Let us learn to take men as we find them. No two men view a question from the same standpoint. Let us not rashly set a man down as a fool because he cannot see things as we see them. Let us not rashly attribute wrong motives to a man whose course we cannot approve of. And if willful injury has been done us let us not brood over it, watching for a chance to strike back, but rather forgive as we hope to be forgiven. By so doing we shall promote peace and good will among our brethren, we shall glorify the God of peace, we shall find rest in our own souls and we shall take away from the enemies of our Church one great pretext for blaspheming against her.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

St. Paul, in to-day's Lesson, touches upon a point which our Lord has touched upon in the Sermon on the Mount. "Be not solicitous for your life,

or for your raiment, or for food and drink," says Jesus Christ. Our Heavenly Father, He tells us, knows what we need, and will provide for us. He feeds the birds of the air, which neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. He clothes the lilies of the field with a splendor greater than that of Solomon. God knows our needs and God loves us. To be solicitous is, according to the Word of Christ, to do as the heathens do and to incur the reproach of being men of little faith. Recalling all this, the Apostle tells his Philippian converts to be nothing solicitous — to entertain no anxious cares, but to trust in God and to make their every want known to Him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. The Lord is nigh to them that call upon Him.

It is important to understand just what is meant by the warnings of Christ and of St. Paul against solicitude. "Be not solicitous" means, simply, "take no anxious thought." Prudent foresight and diligence in attending to the duties of our state in life are by no means condemned. "Labor must be exercised," says St. Jerome, "but solicitude must be avoided." Labor is the appointed lot of man since the hour in which God said to fallen Adam: "With labor and toil shalt thou eat of the fruits of the earth all the days of thy life." "If any man

will not work, let him not eat," says St. Paul to the Thessalonians. And the slothful man, who hideth his hand in his bosom and will not plow his field, shall, as it is written in the Book of Proverbs, beg in the time of the harvest. Avoiding alike slothfulness and the feverish activity of those who toil without thought of Him Who gives strength to their arms, and Whose gift the harvest is, we Christians must be diligent with a diligence inspired and sustained by faith in the goodness of God, from Whom proceeds every good and perfect gift. Work hard, but pray hard also, that your work may prosper. Strive to deserve success rather than to conquer it by the might of the flesh. Be earnest in prayer as a preparation for each day's labor. All that you do, do for God's glory and though you may not heap up riches here,— for Christ has promised not earthly blessings to those that follow Him, but rather the joys of Paradise — you will be laying up for yourselves treasures eternal in the heavens. If things go well, rejoice. If they go not well, humanly speaking, still rejoice in the Lord. "Cast thy care upon Him" says the Psalmist, "and He shall sustain thee."

Some of us imagine that the Scriptural exhortations against anxious thought in worldly concerns, touch not us but only them who have many posses-

sions. This is a mistake. The man who is struggling to rise in the world and to lift his children to a higher plane than that in which he was born, needs to be warned against heathenish "solicitude" quite as often and as pointedly as the man whose business interests are world-wide and whose dollars are counted by millions. That his intentions are good from one point of view matters but little. To plan and scheme and labor without taking into account the fact that, without the divine assistance, neither planning nor toiling will avail, is to ignore God's Providence, and to be guilty of a kind of infidelity. Our Lord has told us that we can no more, by our solicitude, advance our works than we can by thinking, add one hair's breadth to our stature, or, as some interpret Him, add one second to the number of the days that has been fixed for us. Let us, in making provision for our wants and those of our families, do our best and confide in God. What St. Paul says of himself we also ought to say, "Our sufficiency is from God." Let us, as the Apostle bids us, join prayer to labor, prayer made with confidence, with perseverance and with thanksgiving — with confidence of obtaining what we need — with perseverance according to the teaching of Our Lord in His parables and with thanksgiving for past blessings. Gratitude for

what we have already received is a necessary condition of acceptance in preferring new petitions. "For," as St. Chrysostom says, "how can he reasonably expect new favors who neglect to return thanks for past benefits?" Great stress is laid on this point by St. Paul. All his epistles, with a single exception, begin with the expression of thanksgiving; he speaks of this duty at least ten times in his messages to the Churches.

We must pray with perseverance. The parable of the importunate widow who, by her wearisome solicitation, broke down the obstinacy of the judge, who would not avenge her of her adversary, was spoken by Our Lord for the specific purpose of illustrating His saying, "that we ought always to pray and not to faint." He wants us to understand that importunity in prayer will in the end have its effect. God loves to see us persevering. Our petitions cannot weary Him, but if we importunate, He will grant us things which he could not grant otherwise. The parable of the friend at midnight which follows close upon the request of the disciples, "Lord teach us how to pray as John also taught his followers," was evidently intended by Jesus Christ to show us the need of perseverance in prayer. The importunity of the man who wanted to borrow three loaves of bread for the entertainment of the friend that

had come to visit him was rewarded by his obtaining not merely three loaves but as many as he needed. Be not, therefore, brethren, of that number who, if they are not heard at their first or second prayer, desist from praying. Remember what St. Augustine says: "God withholds his gifts for a time that thou mayest learn to desire them greatly." To show us how persevering we ought to be, Our Lord bids us "ask," "seek," "knock." To "seek" is more than to "ask," and to "knock" is more than to "seek."

Finally, we must pray with confidence. Remember, brethren, that your Heavenly Father, Who feedeth the birds of the air, knoweth your wants and will supply them. Can you doubt His wisdom, His Power, His goodness? In this ordinary Providence He is not wanting to His children. The Psalmist says, "I have been young and am now old, and I have never seen the just forsaken nor his seed begging bread." Add to these the further consideration that Our Lord has told us, that whatsoever we ask of the Father in His name will be given unto us.

Be then, in nothing, solicitous. The future belongs to God, not to you. Only prayer, which is a part of God's Providence, will avail to make that future what you desire it to be — prayer made with

confidence, with perseverance and with thanksgiving. Work hard, pray hard, and trust in God, not in your strength. "They who seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good."

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

In to-day's Lesson the great Apostle makes a suggestion of prime practical importance. God alone knows the hearts of the children of men. Therefore we must not judge rashly of ourselves and much less of others. We cannot, as St. Paul insinuates, fully know our own spiritual status. How then can we pronounce rightly with regard to our neighbors? And if the Apostle feels this, how much more should we?

There is something to scare such of us as cherish a good opinion of ourselves in St. Paul's profession of fear, lest after all his labors and sufferings as a herald of the kingdom of God, he may be, in the sight of heaven, an unprofitable servant — a man liable to the divine wrath rather than a man certain of the divine commendation. He was not conscious of any sin, he chastised his body and brought it into subjection lest while he preached to others he might become a castaway. His zeal for the glory of God knew no bounds and his apostolic career was one

long martyrdom. Nevertheless he says, writing to the Corinthians, that he was not fully assured of being at peace with God or justified in His sight. How then can any one of us presume to pronounce himself just and to look forward with certainty to obtaining the crown of life?

It is God who will judge us — the all-knowing Judge who searches the reins and the heart and Who has said, "When I shall choose an acceptable time, I shall judge even the just." This thought was doubtless in the mind of King David when he says, in his eighteenth psalm, "Who can understand sins? From my secret ones, cleanse me, O Lord." "I try to keep Thy law," he says; "I hope I have kept it. But who perfectly understands? Who knows the faults which he commits? I beg Thee, O Lord, to cleanse me from my hidden thoughts, of which, perhaps, I stand guilty." Those of us who are disposed in moments of self-complacency to felicitate ourselves upon our justice, after the manner of the Pharisee in the parable, will do well to take to heart these words of the Psalmist.

But we may ask ourselves how St. Paul could speak so solemnly of the judgment when, at the same time, he says: "I am not conscious to myself of anything." How can a man commit sin without being conscious of sinning? To answer this ques-

tion, let us call to mind the fact that we often forget past transgressions and thus deceive ourselves. Let us reflect, also, upon the words of David, who says, "O Lord, the sins of my youth and my ignorances, do not remember." Mark that expression, "My ignorances."

St. James says that "in many things we all offend." Not one of us is so confirmed in virtue that he does not sometimes fall into sin, and this is particularly true with regard to the tongue. The man who offends not in speech is, as the Apostle tells us, a perfect man. People contract habits of detraction and perhaps there are no tongues so keen as those of the Pharisees. They shrink from downright mortal sins, but they commit venial sins without scruple. They make the distinction between mortal and venial offences a rule of conduct which it was never intended to be. The sincere, earnest Christian ought to avoid all deliberate sin, whether mortal or venial, seeing that all sin is hateful to God. Let us be frank with ourselves, brethren, and see if we have not many things wherewith to reproach ourselves under this head. Can we not remember countless lies which we justified, perhaps, on the ground of necessity? Countless detractions which we excused on the ground that we were telling the truth? Countless viola-

tions of the second commandment which we palliate on the ground that we were joking or angry? Countless instances of carelessness in the matter of prayer and in attendance at Mass — whole legions of sins for which we have never done penance, and perhaps never will? It is well to dwell on the mercy and goodness of God, but we ought, like the Apostle, to keep before our eyes the fearful prospect of judgment. We may forget our transgressions but God's memory fails not, and He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of our hearts. Many of us, unless we mend our ways, will be painfully surprised in the day of reckoning to find that God does not think quite so favorably of us as we are disposed to think of ourselves.

"Do not remember my ignorances," says the Psalmist. There is an ignorance which is not sinful, and there is an ignorance which is culpable. It is not sinful for a man not to know those things which he is not bound to know. It is, however, sinful for a man not to know those things without a knowledge of which he cannot rightly do an act which he is bound to do. As Christians we are bound to know the articles of faith and the Commandments of God and of His Church. Now, the ignorance of a man who realizes his ignorance about

something which he is bound to know, but who either wills to remain ignorant in order that he may have an excuse for doing something which he suspects may be a sin, or who, by reason of the trouble of inquiry or through pressure of other occupations, neglects to learn that which would have hindered him from sinning, is culpable. This may sound very dry and unpractical, but it is, nevertheless, of the first practical importance. Time and time again many of us have, perhaps, sinned because of ignorance which we ought to have dispelled, but in which we have been content to rest supine. Wherefore, we have much reason to say with the Royal Prophet, "Do not remember my ignorances, O Lord."

Let us beware then, brethren, of spiritual pride. Let us remember, when we are tempted to congratulate ourselves on our own fancied righteousness and to despise those whom we judge to be less godly than ourselves, that God's estimate of us is likely to be less flattering. Let us bear well in mind the fact that He has a long memory, and that there are many shortcomings laid up against us of which we have no recollection, and for which we have never done penance, but for which we must answer before His Throne. And let us be impressed by the example of humility and of the fear of God which the holy Apostle gives us in the Lesson for this day. God

alone knoweth all things and God will judge us according to our works.

SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

This is a day of great joy to all nations — the birthday of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Let us, like the shepherds, who first among the children of men were made aware that the long expected Messiah was at last come, go up to Bethlehem and view in spirit the great thing that happened there of which the Gospel for to-day has told us, and kneeling by the manger with Mary and Joseph let us ask ourselves who this Child is that the choirs of heaven should sing to men of joy at his birth. To the bodily eye He looks like any other child of the race of Abraham, He is as poor as the poorest and He suffers from the wintry cold. Faith tells us that this child is more than man. The Son of Mary, He is the Son of God. This is the Redeemer promised to our first parents in the moment of their fall by their outraged yet merciful Creator and for whom the world has been waiting for four thousand years. This is the Prince of Peace, the Emmanuel of whom the Prophets of Israel so often spoke. Look in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel and you will find out what He is. He is the Word made

flesh, full of grace and truth, the Word which was in the beginning which was with God, which was God, by whom all things were made and without whom was made nothing that was made. This is the Eternal Son of God, begotten before the day star. This is He whom the creed declares to be the God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. And from the bosom of the Father, emptying Himself of the glory which is His heritage, He came to dwell among us, came to be a little child to live a life of labor and poverty and finally to die the death of a slave. And when we ask ourselves why this wonderful thing was done, we put our finger upon the great mystery of Christmas. No wonder the world was startled when the Apostles preached to it the story of the generation and birth of Christ. That birth was the supreme revelation of the infinite love of God. God so loved the world that he sent down for its redemption His only Son. And what is man that God should thus be mindful of him, or the children of men that God should think of them? Man, though made in God's image, and only a little less than the angels, was after all but a creature, and what was more, a creature that had, by His own wanton disobedience, forfeited the friendship and, if we may say it, frustrated, so far as he could, the designs of his Creator. Generation

succeeded to generation and the children of men turned away from the service of their Creator who is blessed forever to worship false gods, the work of their own hands. All the world save one little nation was sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, and the chosen people, the seed of Abraham was fallen from the piety of their father, Abraham. We know from the words of Our Blessed Lord what manner of men they were who sat in the chair of Moses and who busied themselves about trifles, neglecting the weightier things of the law, judgment and mercy and faith. Long before the coming of Christ, God, by the mouth of Malachy, last of the prophets, had warned the priests of Israel who despised His name that He had no pleasure in them and that He would not receive a gift at their hands. It was a time when humanly speaking men should expect wrath rather than mercy and kindness from the Most High. But just then when man's need and man's iniquity were greatest, God gave the crowning proof of His mercy. Into a sinful world He sent His only begotten Son, full of grace and of truth.

Christ came to enlighten the nations that were sitting in darkness and given over to the errors of paganism. He came to give glory to God as the angels sang at His birth by recalling mankind to a

sense of its duties toward the Creator. He found the world a desert; He has changed it into a paradise. Man adored the beasts of the field and idols of his own creation. Jesus came and the temples of the false gods were forsaken; all over the world today the name of God is glorified and everywhere the clean oblation spoken of by the prophet is offered up to the King of the ages immortal and invisible.

Christ came to redeem us from sin and hell. Man could not make adequate atonement to God for the infinite malice of sin. He could not satisfy the Divine Justice. To offer to God full reparation for the sins of the world it was necessary that the Word of God should become man, should assume our human nature without ceasing to be God. As man he suffered, as God he deified his suffering, atoned for our sins and appeased the Divine anger. All His actions, even those that proceeded from his sacred humanity, were Divine and of infinite value for they were the actions of a Divine person, the incarnate Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Christ not only took upon Himself our human nature, but he took it in poverty and wretchedness. He wished to teach us to lay aside our pride. It is a vice as strongly grounded in the poor as in the rich, and how hard it is to eradicate it and how im-

portant withal we may see from the example Christ chose to give us, He came to teach us that we are not to fix our hearts upon the things of this life, that the sons of God ought not to be of the earth's earthy, but ought to fix their affections upon the things that are above.

Christ came to bring peace to men of good will — peace which is the greatest of earthly joys and a foretaste of the peace that awaits us eternal in the heavens, and He sowed the seed of this peace by teaching men the duty of charity, the duty of loving one another as beseems children of Our Father who is in heaven.

Here are some of the reflections that come to mind when we consider the gift of God to us on that first Christmas night so many centuries ago. And who, among the children of the Church, can withhold the tribute of gratitude to God which these reflections suggest. Every day in the holy Mass the Church calls upon us to lift our hearts and give thanks to the Lord Our God. Especially should we hearken to that call to-day in which we commemorate the greatest of God's mercies. In the birth of Jesus Christ the infinite greatness and kindness of Our Lord hath appeared. Blessed then be the Lord God of Israel, this day and forever, who because

of the exceeding love wherewith he has loved us, hath visited His people and sought their redemption.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

Brethren — To-day is the last Sunday of the year. We shall do well to withdraw ourselves for a brief space from the joys of the holiday season and consider our record for the past twelve months from the point of view of duty and faith. There is much to be grateful for and much to regret. Gratitude to God for the blessings that have come to us during the year which will soon be a memory, will avail much to move the Lord and Giver of life and of every good and perfect gift, to continue His bounty. As to regrets, how many of us can honestly say that, after the example of our Lord, we have advanced in grace and virtue during the past twelve months; that as St. Paul says of himself, we, mindful of the vocation to which we are called, have during the last twelve months, done our best to obtain the prize to which God incites us, through the merits of Christ. The awful hour of judgment, when He, to whose service our lives ought to be devoted, will pronounce upon our fitness to share the

lot of the saints in light, draws nearer and nearer as the days and months glide by. Many of our brethren, whose hopes of long life were, at this time last year, as bright as our own, have, meanwhile, been summoned hence. That we shall follow them is as certain as that the sun will set to-night. We know the fate of the unprofitable servant. Let us begin, now at least, to take care lest we share it. Let us endeavor to placate God for the shortcomings of the past by hearty contrition and let us resolve to serve Him henceforth as faith directs, whether many years await us, or whether our term of life is soon to close.

The principal business of a Christian is to increase in grace and virtue as he grows up in years. Material and industrial progress, for the advancement of which men put forth the powers of their minds and bodies, is not the end of life. There is one thing necessary, as Our Lord said to Martha, who was troubled about many things, and that one thing is the business of salvation. The years that have been spent in forwarding other business are lost, so far as eternity is concerned. We are travelers in this world; we have not here an abiding habitation. It is God's will that every step we take on our journey from the cradle to the grave shall be a step toward heaven. "Be ye therefore perfect."

says Our Lord, "as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." And St. Peter, after reminding us that God has conferred upon us all the gifts which contribute to bring us to godliness here and eternal life hereafter, exhorts us to avoid the wisdom of this world, and to coöperate with God by employing all diligence and care for the permanence of these gifts, joining good works to faith, joining prudence to good works, governing our passions, enduring afflictions and mortifications in the spirit of Christian patience. With piety toward God we must join love for our neighbor, a love based on the motive of charity. The Apostle tells us that if we live in this way we shall not be without the fruit and merit of good works, and shall make our calling and election sure. How many of us can honestly say that we have done all these things?

How many of us can, without wronging truth, credit ourselves with progress in faith, hope and charity; in humility, truthfulness, patience; in prayer, reception of the sacraments and the devout hearing of mass; in cultivating care and thought for others, and in getting the upper hand over ourselves? How many of us, rather, must confess on an impartial review of the past year, that we have lost, rather than gained ground? And what will become of us if we thus continue to the end slaves to the

same sinful habits — habits which, by indulgence, grow stronger and stronger?

Brethren, what St. Paul calls "the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" is not to be won by sloth or by over confidence in the mercy of God. "God who made us without ourselves," says St. Augustine, "will not save us without ourselves." The great apostle compares the Christian life to a race in which only he, who has run according to the conditions prescribed, can hope to win the prize. Our Lord has told us that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and that only the violent will bear it away. And by the "violent" we may understand those who do violence to their own natural desires. The Christian life, we are elsewhere told, is a warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil, in which only they who persevere to the end, armed with the arms of the spirit, can hope for victory. Elsewhere, again, we are told that our souls are vineyards which we must till if we are to abound in the fruit of good works that shall endure to life everlasting. Now ground that is not tilled becomes covered with weeds and thistles which soon choke the good plants. And lest these thoughts fail properly to impress us, let us consider the parable of the barren fig tree. Our Lord tells us that "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vine-

yard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard, behold, for these three years I come seeking fruits in this town and I find none; cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it to the ground? But he answering said to Him, Lord, let it alone this year; also until I dig about it and dung it, and if, happily, it bear fruit; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." The moral of the parable is obvious. Primarily addressed to the Jewish people, it represents the forbearance of God in dealing with souls upon whom He showers graces and blessings and from whom He expects fruit. The barren fig tree is a figure of the Christian whose faith is inactive. God is patient, God is bountiful; the tree is watered with many graces and favors, but it remains unfruitful. Many and many a time the master of the vineyard, in his disappointment, has been disposed to destroy this tree, and would have done so but for the prayers of holy church and the angels and saints. Let each one apply the parable to himself. Not for three years only has the careless Christian failed to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, but for thirty or forty or fifty years — perhaps during his entire lifetime. God's patience is great, but His forbearance will not hold always.

Some day the Lord of the vineyard will execute His threat.

Again many Christians affect to palliate the defects of their lives by professing extraordinary trust in the mercy of God. "God is good." Yes, but God is not mocked. Has He not warned us that if we want to enter into eternal life we must keep His commandments? And are we to regard the precepts of the all Holy, all-Wise God merely as willful children regard the commands of their fond but foolish parents? God is good, brethren, but remember that the virtue of hope stands midway between despair and presumption. Hope is a virtue whereby we do homage to the goodness and mercy of God. But, to look forward to the enjoyment of the happiness of Heaven, while neglecting to fulfill the conditions which God has prescribed, is a kind of blasphemy. God is good, but God is just and He has promised to render to every man according to that man's words. God is merciful, but His mercy is upon those who fear Him, not upon those who flout Him.

For many of us, brethren, this Christmas season is the last that we shall ever see. Let us realize, even though it be only at the eleventh hour, what life means to the good Catholic. Let us try to do something for eternity. Let us put aside all sloth and

presumption. Let us live soberly, justly and piously, replacing old vices by virtues to which we have hitherto been strangers, directing every thought and word and work to the fulfillment of God's designs in our behalf, and every day drawing nearer and nearer to what the Apostle calls "the prize of our high calling in Jesus Christ."

NEW YEAR'S DAY

We stand to-day on the threshold of a new year. It is a day of regrets for the past and resolves for the future. Few, very few, of us can look back upon the year just ended with anything like complacency. We know what the record of it ought to be and we feel, if we are honest with ourselves, that the actual record set down in the great book of the infinite knowledge of God, is a humiliating and discreditable one. God has been very good to us, but we have shown slight appreciation of the fact. Against the few meritorious deeds we can recall, set down the countless sins of omission and commission, the graces we failed to correspond with, the days we wasted. We repent of these things, but God himself cannot give back to us the vanished days we might have made so fruitful in good works. But, after all, brethren, there is lit-

tle use in general considerations of this kind. What we need is a realizing sense of what God expects of us as the days go by, and so I shall ask you to reflect upon the pregnant text which, though appointed to be read for you some days hence, is particularly appropriate to this day. "Jesus advanced in wisdom, age and grace." It places before us an example the following of which ought to be our chief concern now and henceforth. The principal business of a Christian is, after the high example of Jesus Christ, to increase in grace and virtue as he increases in years. Life is a journey, through time to eternity. We are travelers, and just as the business of a traveler is daily to draw nearer to his journey's end, so we, as the days slip by, ought to advance day by day in the path which leads to eternal life. The nearer we come to our graves, the fitter we ought to be for heaven. Now how does our conduct square with this rule? Are we already as much advanced in virtue as we are in life? Have we every year made some progress in Christian perfection? Do we find ourselves better than we were some years ago? Only few, perhaps, can with sincerity answer "yes" to these uncomfortable questions. Many of us will ruefully be obliged to confess that we have lost rather than gained ground. And if so, how is it all going to end?

What will become of us if we continue from year to year attached to the same old sinful habits, making good resolves only to break them the next day, and at the end of every year worse than we were at the beginning? God is good, God is patient, God is merciful, but must not such a course as this end some day in our destruction? God is not mocked.

Now, brethren, we are not masters of our own lives. We are but tenants at pleasure and God, from whom we hold our being, will one day call us hence. There is nothing between us and eternity but life, and that is the frailest thing in the world. Who can promise himself that he will see the end of the year upon which we are now entering? Youth gives no assurance on this point, nor perfect health, nor a strong constitution. Young and old, the strong and the weak, are alike powerless to resist the command of God bidding us depart hence. Look back upon the past year and see how many mounds have arisen in the cemetery during that short period. We may be resting there before the snow flies again. It is true, the matter is doubtful and uncertain, but still, though it is reasonable to hope and pray for the best, it is folly not to fear the worst and madness not to provide against it. *Qualis vita finis ita* says the proverb — as our life

is so the end shall be and upon that depends eternity. Death is certain as to the event, uncertain as to the time. Therefore, let us prepare for it by the immediate and lasting reform of our lives. How many souls are now writhing in torment and despair, who, had they made such reform one year ago, would now be enjoying the happiness of heaven. They were exhorted as you are, they acknowledged the justice of the warnings they received, but they presumed too much upon the patience of God, were cut off with their sins upon their heads, are now lamenting their folly in the prison house of hell. *Ergo erravimus nos insensati.* "How woefully we erred, fools that we were."

Now there is a parable in the 13th chapter of St. Luke which comes in well right here. Our Lord said, "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his orchard and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to his dresser of the vineyard, behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I found none. Cut it down therefore. Why cumbereth it the ground? But he answering said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also until I dig about it, and dung it, and if happily it bear fruit; but if not, then thou shalt cut it down."

The lesson conveyed by this parable is plain. The

barren fig tree is a figure of a Christian whose faith though watered with graces and favors, is barren, yields no fruit of good works. Year after year, God, the master of the vineyard, looks for fruit from him. After many years of vain expectation, finding no fruit or promise thereof, he determined to destroy that tree. But at the earnest prayers of the Church, or because of the intercession of some charitable persons, he defers the execution of the sentence. In the meantime the priests of the Church by their private admonitions or public exhortations try to bring the sinner to a sense of his duty and of the danger of his state. And if he is deaf to all warnings and encouragement, some day when the limit of forbearance has been reached, he will receive sentence of death, the forerunner of the sentence of eternal reprobation.

Now let us apply the whole parable to ourselves. Let us take a glance back upon our own lives and see whether our spiritual condition is not faithfully represented by the barren fig tree. How many evil habits have fastened upon us and how long we have been under their dominion. How many years has the merciful Lord of the vineyard been looking to us to bring forth fruit worthy of penance. And He has hitherto found nothing in us but promises lightly spoken, half-hearted desires and resolves

broken as soon as they were made. How justly then He can say to us, "Behold these twenty, thirty, forty years have I sought fruit from this tree and I find none." How justly then, long ago, might He have given sentence of uprooting and burning against us? Perhaps it was the prayers of friends and relatives, that moved God, though provoked by our oft reiterated sins, to suspend sentence. But His forbearance cannot last always. Some day or other the ax will be laid to the roots of the tree and we shall outrage His majestic patience no more.

Now, brethren, what resolves ought these considerations to inspire? Amendment is the thing necessary. We ought to find out just what stands in the way thereof and to remove it. Is it some exterior occasion that keeps us where we are? We must resolve to shun that occasion. All other endeavors will amount to nothing. We may make the best resolutions imaginable, but if we love danger so as to expose ourselves to it unnecessarily, we shall certainly perish in it, and the end of the year will find us, either in the same condition as the beginning thereof or a worse one.

But if the unfruitfulness of our lives is due to something within ourselves, idleness, which is the fruitful parent of vices, or too much solicitude for the concerns of this life, or indifference about the

concerns of the life to come, then as we love our souls we must rise up in the strength that God will give us to remove these causes. God does not ask us to do the impossible. There is no natural inclination so strong as to deprive a sane man of his free will, and there can be no sin without the free consent of the will. Natural inclinations may be strong, but grace is stronger still. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "in Him who strengthens me." Be constant in prayer, especially in the morning; be vigilant during the day lest you fall into temptation, and do not be misled by the thought that time and age will cure you without any effort on your part. Time is short, time is fleeting, perhaps this night your soul will be taken away from you. And suppose you do grow old, what a sorry offering to God will be your withered hearts and sin-weary souls and the ashes of an ill spent life. Rather turn to God before the days come upon you in which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them."

And now, brethren, let us conclude. Remember why God gives you life and preserves it. Remember that you are here to do his will and by so doing merit, when you are called hence, the reward of faithful servants. Remember that some day, perhaps when you least expect it, you will be called

upon to give an account of your stewardship. Let your faith in these truths no longer be a barren one, but let it find expression in your manner of life henceforth, and so doing you will be following the example set for you by Christ, our model to-day, our judge to-morrow.

EPIPHANY

The feast of Epiphany which we celebrate to-day shares with the feasts of Christmas, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost the distinction of being called in the Canon of the Mass a "day most holy." On it we commemorate three great events in the life of our Lord. The first is His manifestation to the Gentiles, of whom the three Wise Men from the East were the representatives. The second is the beginning of Christ's miracles at Cana in Galilee. The third is the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, when he was proclaimed, by a voice coming down from Heaven, to be the Son of the Most High. The Church, however, is more intent upon the first of these events than upon the other two, and it is with this one, therefore, that we shall concern ourselves to-day.

All we know about the three Wise Men and their visit to Bethlehem is set down in the Gospel to

which you have first listened. Theirs is a wonderful story and one upon which painters and mystics love to dwell. Led by a star they came from afar off to adore the new-born King of the Jews. Evidently they knew little about the things that had been foretold concerning this King by the Prophets of Israel. It was from the chief priests and teachers of the Jewish people, who had been called together by Herod, that they learned where the Christ should be born. They went to Bethlehem, they found the child with Mary His mother, and, though there were no signs of royalty about Him, they adored Him, offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and returned to their own country without passing through Jerusalem. Whence they came, who they were, how they learned the meaning of the star, what their after-history was, we do not know. Their relics are piously believed to be resting, after many wanderings, in the Cathedral of Cologne.

Now what practical considerations are suggested by to-day's Gospel? The first is that, after the example of the Wise Men, we should adore the divinity of the Son of Mary. The second is that the Church which He founded is an universal Church. His Mission was not for one race and country, like the mission of the prophets, but for all lands and peoples. In His Church there was to be no dis-

tinction between Jew and Gentile or bondman or free, but the children of the heathen were to sit down at the same table with the children of the Covenant — the Seed of Abraham. If we want to realize something of the purpose of Christ's coming, let us remember, brethren, that the Gospel which we have just heard, is read and explained to-day in every language and clime under heaven. The story of the Wise Men with the lessons of their earnest seeking of the new-born King, their strong faith in Him, though he seemed to be nothing more than the Child of poverty, their generosity to Him in giving to Him the precious offerings made to Kings, all that is familiar to hundreds of millions of the faithful, whether in Europe, or in this Western world, or in the empires of the East, or the Islands of the Sea, or the dark Continent. Go where you will, you will find the Catholic sacrifice, and that obedience to the authority of the Vicar of Christ which is the supreme sign of Catholic unity. And of all these millions the three Wise Men from the East were the advance-guard, so to speak. Eight hundred years before they came to Jerusalem on their mysterious quest, Isaias saw them in his rapt vision, walking in the light of the Star of Bethlehem bringing their gifts of gold and perfumes and proclaiming praise to the Lord.

Well does the Church hold up the prophets' words for our edification in to-day's Lesson.

The story of the Magi, while one of the most beautiful of those connected with the coming of Our Lord, is at the same time one of the most touching and encouraging. There is a hint for us whose faith in Jesus Christ is so cold, in the warm faith of those who followed the Star, fearing neither hardship nor weariness, through the wilderness, farther and farther from their own homes, obedient to His divine call, even as Abraham was when God called upon him to go farther from the City of his fathers, and showing, when they came to the end of their search, as much humility as faith. And how do we, brethren, imitate their example? Are we ready, like them, to sacrifice ease and comfort, that we may on the day appointed, render to Christ, the homage which is His due and which the Church commands us to give under pain of mortal sin? This is a question which many of us who have fallen into easy notions about hearing Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation might profitably reflect upon.

The gifts which the Wise Men offered to the infant Christ are full of spiritual meaning. Gold, the royal metal, is a symbol of charity; the queen of the virtues. Incense is the symbol of prayer.

Myrrh is the symbol of hope — the hope of sharing in the glory of the Resurrection of Him who is the first born of the dead. Let us during this year and all the years to come, be assiduous in the practice of charity, loving God with the fullness of our hearts, and giving him proof of our love, which is fidelity to His commandments. Let us love our brethren as ourselves for God's sake, being patient and kind toward them, thinking no evil of them, saying no evil of them, and doing good to all men. Let us be diligent in prayer, mindful of the commands of Jesus Christ, and mindful, too, that prayer is a part of God's Providence, the conditions under which the treasures of the Divine bounty will be opened to us. "Ask and you shall receive," says our Lord, but ask with that confidence and humility and perseverance which God expects of us. Let us be strong in hope —"the anchor of the soul"— as St. Paul calls it. Life for most of us seems to be a hard journey — full of weariness and trials and disappointments. But we walk in the noon-day light of the Gospel. Lift up your eyes to the hills whereon shines the city of God. There you will soon see Him, Who was born for us a little Child in the land of Juda in Whom we have believed and Whom we have loved, Who has prepared a place for us in the house of His Father, and

Whom we shall adore with endless adoration in the company of the angels and saints.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

St. Luke tells us all we know about Our Lord's childhood when he writes "The boy grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in him." These words apparently so simple, are nevertheless full of difficulty. On the one hand, Jesus Christ was the Son of God. In Him, according to St. Paul, the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth corporally — that is to say, dwelleth really and substantially as the soul dwells in the body. The Son of God assumed our human nature without undergoing any change whatever in His Divine Nature. The Son of Mary was, therefore, all wise, all holy, all powerful, and He possessed these attributes from eternity. The common notion is that He manifested His power and wisdom by degrees and that His development was merely apparent. But on the other hand, Our Lord willed to be a child and to submit Himself to the limitations of childhood really and indeed. Now, how are we to reconcile the infinite wisdom of the Godhead with those limitations? We cannot comprehend this matter. We can only say, Lord, I believe, though

I cannot understand. The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God suggests many such problems which can never be fully sounded or solved until we see God face to face.

Then the Evangelist goes on to say that Joseph and Mary went up every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the Passover. There were three solemn feast days — the Passover — the celebration of the giving of the commandments on Mt. Sinai, and the feast which commemorated the tent-life of the Israelites, on each of which every adult Jew, living in Judea, had to be present in Jerusalem. No obligation was laid upon Jewish women of assisting at these solemnities, but they were not forbidden to do so if they were disposed. And so the Blessed Virgin went up to the Temple yearly, though the journey required about four days. Our Lord was twelve years old when, for the first time doubtless, He made the journey to Jerusalem. The Holy Family passed the seven days of the Passover in the city and then they set out with their friends and neighbors to return into Galilee. Now it may seem strange that Joseph and Mary did not miss Jesus till the end of the first day's journey. They thought, as the Gospel indicates, that he was among their kinsfolk and acquaintances from Nazareth and that he would rejoin them when the great caravan

came to a halt at eventide. To and from the festivals the people traveled in caravans for greater safety against robbers. During the day the men led the way on foot, the women and old people rode on beasts of burden. Children, probably, were free to accompany either parent, but at night each family met together in its own tent.

Imagine the grief that filled the hearts of Joseph and Mary, when they sought Jesus and could not find Him. They returned to Jerusalem and after three days, as the gospel says, they found Him in the temple sitting among the doctors, the interpreters of the Scriptures, hearing them and asking them questions. And these learned men and all that heard Him wondered at the keenness of His understanding and His thoughtful answers. Joseph, full of reverence for Jesus, did not speak to Him. He let His mother do so. She said to him, "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." We ought not to imagine that these words were spoken in anger or intended as a rebuke. They simply express surprise and sorrow. The Gospel tells us that Mary and Joseph did not understand His answer. "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Some argue from this passage that the Blessed Virgin did

not know what her Son really was. But we can hardly believe this when we remember the words of the angel who came to tell Mary that she was to be the mother of the Saviour of the world. Said Gabriel to her, "The Holy one which shall be born of thee, shall be called the son of God." And Joseph, too, had also received a message from God telling him of what was to come to pass. And again did not the shepherds tell them what they had heard and seen in the fields outside Bethlehem — which things Mary kept and pondered in her heart. It is easier to suppose that the sorrow of the mother over the loss of her only Son, had, for the time being, put out of her mind the remembrance of His divine nature and mission which she certainly was aware of. And yet there are people who, despite such passages as this, pretend that the Bible is an easy book.

Now let us see what there is in the Gospel of the Divine Childhood that is of practical import. There are at least two lessons in it — one for the parents, the other for the children. We see that Mary and Joseph brought Jesus with them to take part in the feast of the Passover. Here is an example for you, fathers and mothers, to follow. You are careful to send your children to school and pride yourself on their progress in worldly knowledge. You ought to

remember that though worldly knowledge is useful, the science of salvation is necessary. You ought to bring your children with you to church, or at least see that they go there in order that they may learn and be accustomed to practice those things they must do in order to gain Heaven. Any child who is old enough to go to school is old enough to go to church. Teach your children from the start to love the house of God, and to reverence the sanctuary.

Again parents ought, no matter what sorrow it occasions them, to submit to the will of God as manifested in the vocation of their children. Put nothing in the way of their attending to their Heavenly Father's business. Do not attempt to discourage them, as worldly-minded parents do, by dwelling on the hard lot of priests and religious. God gives you your children to train up for His service. Let not your parental affection blind you to this tremendous fact.

Again, the example of Joseph and Mary who every year made the journey of four days in order to be present at the ceremonies of the Passover ought to remind us of the obligation we are under of receiving the Holy Eucharist at the time appointed. If we are sinners let the conduct of the holy couple in their search for Jesus be our model. They sought and found Him in the Temple. Let

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us seek Him with an humble and contrite heart at the foot of the altar and in the confessional, and the joy of Joseph and Mary will be ours.

The lesson for children contained in to-day's Gospel is set forth in the words in which the Evangelist chronicles the life of our God from his twelfth to his thirtieth year. "He was subject to them." God gave the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother" amid the thunders of Mt. Sinai. God, Himself, incarnate, has shown us how much store He sets by this precept. He was subject to Joseph and Mary. He was the all wise, all knowing, all powerful God; and yet he was obedient to his mother and her spouse. Let not the example of Jesus Christ be lost upon the young.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

A wedding-feast in Cana of Galilee, to which He was invited with His disciples and at which His mother was a guest, gave occasion to the first miracle of Our Blessed Lord. It seems strange to think of His being present, even as a looker-on, at a gathering of this nature. But we must remember how sacred a thing marriage is in His eyes as is shown by His teaching at a later day. He looked upon it as the symbol of the perfect covenant be-

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tween Himself and His Church. He restored and made binding upon His followers the primal law, according to which man and wife were to live together in a union to be broken only by death. He furthermore gave to the marriage contract a sacramental efficacy, made it a channel of graces to enable the married couple to carry out the high and holy purposes for which marriage was instituted. Like Her Divine Founder, the Church regards marriage as a most solemn and sacred thing — a relation fraught with consequences of highest temporal and spiritual importance to generations yet unborn. And again, like Her Divine Founder, she consecrates, with her benediction, the joy of her children, who, in obedience to the call of God, have entered upon this relation.

We may suppose that the Blessed Virgin, in her charity, helped the friends who invited her and her Son in the preparations for the feast. Doubtless she knew what their resources were in the matter of entertainment, and anyhow she was the first to perceive that the stock of wine was running low. She was distressed. The young couple would be disgraced if they could not provide as the occasion demanded for the wants of the guests whom they had invited, and the joy of their wedding day would be turned into confusion. For years, Jesus had

been subject to her. Accustomed to have her wishes obeyed she brought the need of their hosts before Him in what is clearly an implicit request. When the sisters of the dying Lazarus wanted Our Lord to come and heal their brother they sent this message: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick," and Jesus understood. In the same way His mother said to Him, "They have no wine." That she looked for help from Him is plain from her words to the servants: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." His answer must have been a surprise to her. He wished to show her, now that His public life was begun, that He had, in a manner, ceased to belong to her. It was not a rebuke — the phrase He used does not generally bear such a signification. It simply expresses according to the great Scripturist, Cardinal Wiseman, the absence or denial of communication between the parties concerned. It sounds harsh to us, but in the tongue in which it was spoken, it was in perfect consonance with the forms of highest courtesy. The first word which seems so cold and hard to us was a term of respect. "Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come," or as Cardinal Wiseman prefers to translate it, "What have I to do with thee?" Mary was not disheartened by this answer, but on the contrary gave directions to the waiters to hold

themselves in readiness to do as Jesus might say. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Soon Christ's hour was come. The last drops of wine provided for the feast had been poured out and the bridegroom's discomfiture was imminent.

Now there stood in the room six stone jars containing about twenty gallons apiece. They were put there to hold water to be used in accordance with the customs and traditional observances of the Jews for washing before and during and after eating. Already the jars were being emptied. Jesus bade the servants fill them again, who forsooth filled them to the brim. Then said He, "Draw out some and carry it to the master of the feast." They did so, and the master of the feast, who knew not what had happened, told the bridegroom that he had kept his good wine till the end. The waiters who had drawn the water — they knew what had happened. The water they put into the vessels had been changed into rich wine. It was done at the prayer of Mary. For ourselves let us address our petitions to Jesus Christ with faith and confidence. And when it pleases Him He will at length give us the desires of our heart.

But possibly the lesson which the Church wants us to learn from the Gospel of this day is confidence in Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is our advocate

and patroness with her Divine Son. She has the will and the power to help us all who have recourse to her. And never, as the *Memorare* says, has it been heard through the ages, that anyone who sought her protection, begged her prayers, or asked her help, was forsaken by her. She has the will to help us. The charity which burned in her heart while she was upon earth, burns more ardently now that she sees God face to face. Her love for men increases with her love for God. She is indeed, as the Church calls her, the " Mother of Mercy." She has for us the tenderness of a mother. She regards us all as her children because by baptism we are brethren of Jesus Christ and sons of God. She loves the just because they are conformed to the image of her son. She compassionates sinners because they have been redeemed by His passion and death, and she is ever ready to present our petitions to the Giver of all perfect gifts. That our confidence may be increased, let us remember that she is the Mother of the Church. Christ was dying on Calvary and Mary stood by the Cross. Her mother's heart was pierced with anguish at the sight of sufferings which she could not assuage. Christ had given us His tears, His labors, His vigils, His sweat of blood. He had given us the Sacrament of the Sacraments. As a last gift He gave His own mother.

When He saw her and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to Mary, "Woman, behold thy Son," and after that he said to John, "Behold thy Mother."

Let us remember then, brethren, that she is the mother of mercy, and Virgin most powerful. In temptations, pray to the mother of Divine Grace; in sorrow, pray to the consoler of the afflicted; in doubt, invoke the aid of her who is the seat of wisdom. In all our necessities let us have recourse to Mary, the mother of our Saviour. Honor her not merely by intercession by your rosaries, hymns and litanies, but by imitation according to the measure of your vocation, for she is not only the mother of Christians, but the model as well. Be gentle and kindly, be humble, modest, patient, charitable, resigned to the will of God, as she was. She will make intercession for us and will obtain for us from God the supreme grace of a happy death.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Gospel of this day records two miracles of healing, each the reward of faith in Jesus Christ. He had just concluded His sermon on the Mount and now works signs and wonders to prove that He taught not as the Scribes and Pharisees but as one

having power. Great multitudes followed Him, moved by admiration at His doctrine, for He spoke as no man ever spoke before. His first miracle was an astonishing one — the healing of a leper. This man was as St. Luke tells us " full of leprosy." We may piously suppose that he had lingered on the borders of the crowd that heard the Sermon on the Mount and that he came now to claim the blessings Our Lord had promised to those that suffer and mourn. The lot of this man was a sad one. Leprosy had spread over his whole body. The corruption of death had already laid hold of him. No plague was dreaded more by the Jews. They called it the Finger of God and he who suffered from it was an outcast from his family and friends. Banished from home, looked upon as already dead, not allowed to enter beyond the city gates, his garments tattered, his head shaven and his lips covered, the leper was to his fellow men nothing more than a living sepulcher. When anyone drew near him he was obliged to give warning of his condition by crying out, " Unclean, unclean." This poor man's misery was so utter that our Blessed Lord was minded at the first glance to help him. Said the leper, " Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Our Lord, moved with compassion, stretched forth his hand and, disregarding the ordi-

nances of the Law, touched him and, approving his faith, granted his prayer, saying, "I will; be thou clean," and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And then he bade the man go forthwith and offer to the priests the gift that Moses had commanded to be made in such cases.

The other miracle was a strange one. A man living at some distance was instantly cured by Christ's word. A certain centurion, a captain in the army, probably one of the Roman garrison at Capharnaum, and by birth a Roman, had a servant who was near to death. This servant, as one of the Evangelists says, was dear to him. How he came to know of our Lord's power and goodness we do not know, but he believed in Him, and drawing near, he told Our Lord his trouble. Jesus said, "I will go and heal your servant." The centurion's answer showed how deep was his humility and faith. "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter my house. Only say the word and my servant shall be healed. I am but a centurion yet those under me obey my word. Thou art the Master of things. Only say what Thou wishest and it shall be done." Our Lord declared that he had not found so great faith in Israel, and the servant was healed that same hour.

Now what is there of practical suggestion in the

story of these two miracles? Well, to begin with, leprosy and the palsy, which the centurion's servant was afflicted with, are types of sin. One is a symbol of the corruption of the soul under the dominion of sin; the other is a symbol of the inability of the sinner to do anything for God.

Leprosy is a symbol of sin. As its corroding ulcers eat into the body, disfiguring it and making it hideous in the sight of men, for the leper carries about with him the corruption of the grave, and excluding him from the society of his fellow men, so in a somewhat similar manner does sin affect the immortal soul. It makes the soul hideous in the sight of God and of the Saints and Angels. It breaks the bond of charity which unites us with our brethren in Christ, and leaves the sinner a dead member of the mystical body of Christ. Again, as leprosy is curable only by God who sends it, so sins are forgiven only by the power and in the name of God, and only under such conditions as He has been pleased to impose, namely these three: contrition, confession and satisfaction. Lepers were reputed cured only after showing themselves to the priest as the Law commanded. His sentence was necessary to restore the leper to his former place among his relatives and friends. In like manner no matter how deep and earnest the sorrow of the sinner he

must always have the will to go to the priests of the Church and receive from them the boon of absolution. God forgives only on these terms. And though they entail upon us humiliations grievous to flesh and blood, let us thank Him for the sacrament of cleansing and reconciliation.

The palsy under which the centurion's servant labored is a symbol of the helpless condition of a soul in the state of mortal sin. One of the consequences of sin is this, that it utterly cancels all the merits of a whole life. It matters not how long you have lived in justice and charity and humility before God and man — one mortal sin and the record of all your good actions is blotted out from the Book of God's remembrance. And the Scripture tells us that when a just man turns away from justice to iniquity, his justice shall be no more remembered. But there is something else to be considered. Mortal sin kills the very power of serving God. All the actions of a man in the state of that sin are dead; they have no power to prevail before God for the sinners' salvation. A soul separated from God, i. e., not having the love of God, no matter what it knows or what it does, no matter whether it speaks with the tongue of man and angels, no matter whether it gives all it possesses in alms to the poor, can do nothing unto salvation any more than a tree

cut asunder at the root can bring forth fruit. That soul is dead and all the actions thereof are dead. Let us compassionate our brethren who are in this state and pray to God for their conversion, even as the centurion besought Our Lord on behalf of his afflicted servant. If we have reason to fear that our own souls are in the same condition let us be constant and earnest in prayer, and because our own prayers perhaps may not suffice, let us have recourse to the prayers of others, and especially to the Sacrifice of the Mass. In His own good time Our Lord will send forth His word and our souls shall be healed.

The conduct of the centurion in going to Our Lord to ask that his servant be healed is a lesson to those who are insensible to the miseries of their dependents. Feel for the misfortunes of your brethren and do all you can to relieve them. Bear ye one another's burdens and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ. Let your faith in Christ be a strong and living faith, fruitful in good works as beseems children of His kingdom, the Church of God. Otherwise the threat of Our Lord about exterior darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth will be your eternal portion.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Throughout the whole season which extends from Christmas down to this fourth Sunday after Epiphany, and during which we commemorate the amazing love of God for the children of men, the Church has been continually exhorting us to the practice of charity. The lessons for the past three Sundays were taken from the twelfth chapter of St. Paul to the Romans, and were chiefly concerned in setting forth the various ways in which our love for God and for our neighbor ought to manifest itself. To-day by way of taking leave of the subject for the present we are invited to consider three pregnant verses from the nineteenth chapter of the same epistle, in which the Apostle declares that the whole law of Christ is summed up in the precept of brotherly love. St. Paul had just exhorted the faithful at Rome to pay all men their dues. "Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." And then he goes on to say, "Owe no man anything but to love one another." This means: "Have no debts but the debt of brotherly love." That debt can never be paid off, but, however much has been paid, more remains due. We owe our neighbor love for the sake of God whom we can

never sufficiently recompense. The motive of love always remains which is likeness in nature and destiny. And, finally, charity does not diminish but increases by exercise. And then the Apostle goes on to tell us that he who loveth his neighbor fulfills the Law, and that the love of one's neighbor is a bar to all evil doing.

Charity toward our neighbor is then the burden of this day's Lesson. And if we wonder that the Church insists so much on fraternal charity we have only to remember how much stress Our Lord Himself lays upon it, how often the Apostles dwell upon it, and how prone we all are to violate in thought, word or deed.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Love is the observance of the law — that which fulfills the law. St. Jerome tells a beautiful story about the preaching of St. John which is worth repeating here. When age and weakness grew upon John at Ephesus, so that he was no longer able to preach long discourses to his people, he used to be carried to the assembly of the faithful by his disciples, and every time said to his flock only these words: "My dear children, love one another." When his auditors, wearied with hearing constantly this exhortation, asked him why he always spoke in this strain, he replied: "Because it is the precept of the Lord,

and if you comply with it, you do enough." St. Jerome tells us that the answer was worthy of the great St. John, and that it ought to be inscribed in letters of gold, or, rather, to be written in the heart of every Christian.

Now, let us see, 1, what the precept of loving our neighbor means, and, 2, how the fulfillment of it is, as the Apostle tell us, "the fulfilling of the law." To begin with, our neighbor is not only he who is of one faith and one blood with ourselves — who is bound to us by the ties of mutual benefit and of friendship. The neighbor whom, according to the commands of Christ and St. Paul, we must love, is every other human being, whether of the household of the faith or an infidel, whether he be a relative or a stranger, whether he be one who does good to us or one who hates, persecutes or calumniates us. Every human being is made to the image and likeness of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and destined to participate in the happiness of heaven. God loves all men. All have a place in His mighty heart. Therefore we should love all men — recognizing in them our brethren. We are not obliged to have for all men that special feeling, that affectionate going out of the heart which we have for those who are near and dear to us from a

purely human standpoint. What is required of us is that we desire our neighbor's good from our heart. To love is to wish good to any one. And the love of our neighbor must not be confined to benevolent wishes. It must be practical, it must display itself in doing good. "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth," says St. John. We must, moreover, abstain from all unkind thoughts and feelings toward him and from every injury to his life, character and goods. In other words, the precept of fraternal charity is both *positive* and *negative*. It prescribes certain duties which we must perform, and points out certain acts which we must avoid. It is perhaps just as well to point out here the difference between charity in the Christian sense and mere philanthropy, which is the natural virtue of doing good to our fellow man without reference to motives suggested by faith. St. Paul emphasizes the important distinction between this natural virtue and Christian charity when he says, "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity it profiteth me nothing."

"This is my commandment," saith Our Lord, "that you love one another as I have loved you."

The charity of Christ was sincere, efficacious and universal. Out of love for us and all men He suffered and died.

1. Our charity for our neighbor must be sincere. No Christian fulfills the precept of his Lord who merely shows outward signs of good will, salutes those that salute him, gives alms to the poor, perhaps from vanity. We must love our neighbor as ourselves — heartily and constantly. To exhibit the signs of good will, while cherishing hatred in the heart, is hypocrisy. Remember, that to dislike our neighbor's objectionable ways is a different thing from disliking him personally, and, far from being a sin, may pertain to charity. But we must be careful lest hatred of a man's ways pass into hatred of his personality.

2. Our charity must be efficacious. We must be ready to perform for our brethren those works of mercy, whether spiritual or temporal, of which they stand in need. We must not stop at words of pity. Our actions must demonstrate our charity, otherwise we lay ourselves open to the reproach that we love our neighbor with our lips while our heart is far from him.

We are to follow not the example of the Jews of whom the Gospel speaks, who seeing the traveler lying half dead by the road side passed by and took

no heed, but rather that of the good Samaritan. There is a tremendous passage from the Book of Ecclesiasticus which we shall all do well to ponder.

"Son, defraud not the poor of alms and turn not away thine eyes from him. Despise not the hungry soul; and provoke not the poor in their want. Afflict not the heart of the needy and defer not to give to him that is in distress. Reject not the petition of the afflicted and turn not away the face from the needy. Turn not away thy eyes from the poor for fear of their anger; and leave not to them that ask of thee to curse behind thy back. For the prayer of him that curseth thee in bitterness of soul shall be heard; for He that made him will hear him."

3. Our charity must be universal, including as we have seen already, our enemies as well as our friends. Christ excepts no one. It is a hard saying, but God commands it and we must obey.

In the Sermon on the Mount Our Lord spoke thus: "You have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy.' But, I say to you, love thy enemies. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun

to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans do this? Return not evil for evil, but rather good for evil, and thus thou shalt gain thy brother."

Now, in what sense, it may be asked, does the Apostle declare that the love of our neighbor is the fulfilling of the Law? Our Lord tells us that there are two great commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" is the first. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is the second. St. Paul, as the contex shows, is clearly speaking of what we owe to *man* rather than of what we owe to God. He cites only the commandments that forbid injury to the neighbor. How can the fulfillment of the Second Table of the Law be said to imply the fulfillment of the First Table also? The answer is simple enough. No one truly loves his neighbor unless he loves him in God and for God. Therefore, the love of the neighbor presupposes the love of God for whose sake we love our neighbor.

Brethren, let us take to heart to-day the exhortation which Mother Church gives us in the words of the great Apostle. Let us be of one mind toward each other, forgiving as we hope to be forgiven, bearing one another's burdens, rejoicing with them

that rejoice and sympathizing with them that sorrow, hardening not our hearts against the cry of distress, and remembering that all that we do to our neighbor, we do to Jesus Christ, Himself, who has said: "What you did to one of these, my beloved brethren, ye did it to me."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

And be thankful: giving thanks to God and the Father through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

"Honesty is the best policy," is a maxim of the street and the market place. In the long run it pays, so the wiseacre tells you, to give every man his own. To take another's property — that is, if you can take it and keep it — seems a short cut to wealth, and wealth is what we are all looking for. But experience shows that this short cut is not a public highway. Not to speak of the clamorous reproaches of conscience — for thieves are often deaf to its reproaches — there is the tense shout of "stop thief," to be feared. A man thinks "hard" when a crowd is at his heels, and he knows that he shall lose both his booty and his liberty for being dishonest.

Thus, fear of being caught, makes many a rogue respect his neighbor's goods. He may be a thief

at heart, but one is none the poorer for being envied. The law does not prohibit envy, but it does enforce or at least makes a show of enforcing honesty. We all know that, in spite of laws and maxims, rogues flourish. The most successful rogues, however, are those who prate most loudly about honesty. We call them hypocrites, but none the less by their affectation of honesty they show that the ideal even of a successful rogue is to give every man his own.

Indeed, the basic virtue of commerce is honesty. The courts of law stand to uphold it; the conventions of associations exist to maintain it. It is impossible to do business with a thief — at least when he is thieving, unless you are a policeman. Everywhere, among merchants and men of affairs, the honest man, the man of his word, the "square" man is saluted as a patron saint. The crooked man is the opposite of the square man and but one remove from a "crook." The most elaborate protection is extended by all civilized governments to the owners of property. "Deeds," not words, avail in this case also before the eye of the Court — deeds, that are recorded yes, and defended by all the machinery of legal forms and privileges. "Res clamat dominum," said the old Latin jurists, which

means that "the goods bespeak an owner." So that, on proving property, you can always recover your own.

Now the only Person who has no standing in our courts is Almighty God. He doesn't need to, for our courts — all of them, the best of them — are but the lobby of His tribunal. He is the Judge of all of us — judges and culprits and witnesses and the rest — and our forms and practices flourish only while we are, as it were, waiting our turn to be tried by Him. The Almighty never becomes a plaintiff before our judges, for if He did He would put Himself on a level with us. In our courts we sue and are suited, we bring actions for trover and conversion, we plead for damages, we punish for theft. That is between man and man. Each is limited in his possessions. No matter how rich a man is, he can still receive more. Some other man has something he has not which he needs or desires or envies. If one had all the money in a country and all the land and, in fact, all its wealth, he, at least, would not have all the health or the beauty or the brains of his countrymen. Or, endowed with every grace and power and fabulously rich, he stands in daily peril of loss perhaps from without, certainly from within, for day by day we shrink

away from our "securities," which, fluctuating though they are, are still vastly more secure than we.

But God is secure. He does not shrink away. He is immortal. Death does not await Him. He owns all things and His title is registered in a hall of records where no forger may tamper with the deeds.

He owns all things — even you and me and all that we have and desire to have, our goods, our faculties, our powers — all are His, for He made them. If you own the chair or the table that you make so that you say "it is mine or, at least, the labor and the skill are mine, so that I have a right to my wages," in a much surer way does He own us, since He has not only fashioned us as the carpenter changes wood of a certain kind from one form to another — from the plank to the legs and the leaf of the table — but He also has created the material as well.

Thus we can give Him nothing that is not His. Money, service, love are His due, but not in the sense that they are due to any other. He is not impoverished by our wealth, not put-about by our neglect — not orphaned by our disregard. The more we try to give Him, the more we get in return. It is like putting a plant in the sunshine.

The higher it grows, the more beautiful it appears; the stronger it waxes under the ardors of the sun, the more steadfast, the hardier, the more numerous becomes its roots. Who thinks that the offering of flowers enriches the sun! Why, it is the sun which gives them their glory, blesses them with their radiant colors and listening for a time to their hymns of praise and thanksgiving, sends them on their way with gifts, a hundred fold of seeds that flourish in their turn. So we, striving to acknowledge God's ownership, chanting His praises and His glory, meanwhile receive in our laps the harvest of His blessing.

It is simple honesty that makes us thank God for His gifts. If it is virtue for a man in business to respect what belongs to another; if it is, at least, policy for a man to be honest, is it anything but virtue and policy for us to acknowledge God's proprietorship of all things? That bare acknowledgment is thanksgiving. If you give a poor man an alms, if you assist another who is in straits, you expect at least that both one and the other will take what you give him, admitting that you need not have given him anything for all the claim he had upon you. Is there any word more bitter than that of an "ingrate"? Is there any image more repulsive than that of the greedy client who takes all you

can give him and then turns on his heel without saying so much as "thank you." You call him a barbarian, a savage, and you think of him as the type of the lowest and meanest of men.

Now is there any more reason why we should neglect to honor God's ownership in the world around us than that of one of ourselves? It is true, He will not hale us into court and sue us for appropriating His goods without an acknowledgment. He lets us steal the beauty of life, its opportunities, its riches, and squander them as we will without ever "sheriffing" us out for non-payment of rent. He seems to be an "easy" landlord, but sooner or later we shall have to pay our rent. There is no such thing as "moving" outside of His jurisdiction or dodging His claims when He presents them, or taking any fictitious poor debtor's oath before Him. He asks us for nothing but to admit that He is the Owner of all things. But once we usurp His place, an angel with the flaming sword stands before the gates of Paradise.

Therefore it is that thanksgiving is so often enjoined in the Scriptures, for it is an elementary virtue of Christianity. Therefore it is that Our Lord never prayed while on earth without "giving thanks," as if to remind us that all our gifts to God were God's already and that our merit consisted in

convincing ourselves of our dependence, our need and our real tenure of life and its gifts as at best that of "stewards."

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Gospel of the mustard-seed, which is given to us to reflect upon, on the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, is one of peculiar significance. It is only once in a while that we are called to understand — in some manner — the meaning of this day's similitude and furthermore to realize, in some fashion, our Lord's power of prophecy.

Our Lord was now beginning the second year of His ministry. Humanly speaking, His first year was not a success. He was thirty years old when He began the work His Father set to do. He commenced this stupendous labor by a fast of forty days. His first "sign" — or miracle — was turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana in Galilee. St. John says His disciples believed in Him. Then He went to His home at Nazareth, but the Gospels do not tell us what He did. Then He went to Capharnaum, where His stay was also brief. This much we know; that He manifested His authority and His miracles in a striking manner. Then he went to the city of Jerusalem to

assist at the Passover. He saw the money-lenders and the merchants in the very shadow of the sanctuary. He drove them out, but as St. John says, He told the sellers of doves simply to "take all these birds away from here, and do not make a house of traffic out of My Father's House." Some of the spectators remembered that it was written in the Scriptures, "The zeal of Thy House hath eaten Me up."

After He came back from Jerusalem, He went, of course, through Samaria. He sate down, wearied, by the well of Jacob, at the gates of Sichem, while His disciples went into the town to buy meat. Presently a woman come out to the well. She was a Samaritan of evil life. "Give Me to drink," was Jesus' request of her. "How," she said, "do you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, who am a Samaritan? The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." And she declined to give Him to drink. He began to talk — "Go, bring your husband." The woman had to confess that she had no husband. Jesus said in return that she had five such men. "My Lord," says she, "I see Thou art a Prophet." The Samaritans were in expectation of the Messiah, so she said, "I know that the Messiah, the Christ, is to come, and at His coming He will teach us all things." Then Jesus said, "I am He; I who am

speaking with thee." Meantime, the disciples were coming back with their provender. The inhabitants were so impressed by Jesus' presence that they made Him and His disciples stay two whole days.

Again He went to Nazareth. He entered the synagogue and began to preach from a passage of Isaias. He could not have happened upon a more favorable theme. His speech, so full of grace and wisdom, amazed His hearers. The listeners said one to another, "Is not this the son of Joseph?" They were suspicious, for the Scribes and Pharisees were to be found here, as well as in Jerusalem. "Physician, heal thyself!" someone said. Jesus kept His temper, and answered this attack. The end of it was, that they would have killed Him had He not made His escape. He withdrew from Nazareth as He had done from Jerusalem. Henceforth, He must go forth, not having, as He said, a place whereon to lay His head.

The Jews were well aware that the four hundred years foretold by the last of the Prophets, Malachy, were about accomplished, and that the long-promised Messias was at hand. The Scribes knew the Sacred Scripture as no one else could know it. They knew that the scepter had passed from Judea, and that now Jerusalem was a Roman prov-

ince. The populace, in their longing, pictured the Messias as the king of the world. Jesus of Nazareth was poor. He knew Isaias and all the Prophets. But they preferred to call Him a Prince of Devils, rather than believe in Him. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" was a Jewish saying.

As a matter of fact, Jesus was not a Nazarene at all. When Joseph, hearing that Archelaus reigned in the room of Herod, his father, was afraid to go thither, warned in his sleep, by the angels, he retired into Galilee. And coming, he dwelt in Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled what was said by the Prophets: "That He shall be called a Nazarene." He was born in a stable at Bethlehem. Nazareth was about one hundred miles from Jerusalem in an almost direct line north. To get to Galilee, you had to cross the country known as Samaria. Nazareth was about twenty-five miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee. These places, such as Corazaim, Magdala, Bethsaida and Capharnaum, which Jesus made memorable by His preaching, were on the western shore of the lake. The other places, such as Naim, Mount Tabor, Cana of Galilee, are also near the lake.

Simon, the Pharisee, gave Jesus a banquet at Capharnaum. It was noted that the power and popularity of Jesus overawed even the Pharisees.

All the same, Jesus was not satisfied. We find Him saying, in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew, these words: "Woe to thee, Corazaim! woe to thee, Bethsaida! for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes." The banquet at the house of Simon broke out into open revolt. Jesus deemed it best to forego any direct teaching, and to speak in similitudes. His doctrine was to be in parables henceforth. And He had a vast deal to say concerning the completion of His teaching. Such a sudden change might seem strange. But we should know that the Eastern mind delights in parables.

A parable is a narrative of a probable event, for the purpose of illustrating some religious truth. There is nothing strong or contrary to experience in such a story. There is nothing improbable, nothing fabulous, nothing unreasonable. The parable is designed to illustrate religious truth. This is what distinguishes the parable from all other forms of instruction. The parable, therefore, was chosen by our Lord, because

(1) The religious truth was more attractive and more easily remembered.

(2) The mode of instruction protected the Word of God from irreverence.

(3) By His teaching in parables, our Lord fulfilled the prophecy of the great prophet Isaias. The chief point to be considered in the parable is the truth which it is designed to inculcate.

St. Matthew begins his thirteenth chapter with seven parables. They occur for the first time in our Lord's teaching. They are called the parables of the Kingdom. Besides these, we have twenty-three others in the Gospels.

Our Saviour went down by the Sea of Galilee on the west side, of course. The multitude followed Him down to the shore. Some were for Him, others were against Him. Passing through the vast throng, He entered a fishing-boat, and sitting down on the prow, the highest part of the boat, He looked around Him. Over the heads of the multitude, who covered the beach, His divine eyes could behold the smooth fields sloping to the water's edge, beaten paths winding through the green meadows, while here and there, a huge rock, or a clump of thistles would give a sterner aspect to the pleasant land of Palestine. It was now turning toward summer. The sower on the hillside at hand, the weeds among the wheat, the common mustard-plant, the leaven in the woman's dough, the treasure disclosed by the plough-

share in the field, the pearls of great value to be sold at Bethsaida by the merchants,— He saw them all. There was this peculiarity about parables. There was nothing to help the listeners to an understanding of Jesus' doctrine. It remained a riddle, not only to the Jews, who were strangers to His tenets, but even to the Apostles as well. Afterward, when the discourse was over, His disciples prayed Him for an explanation of the first of His parables, and He graciously answered them. He also expounded to His disciples, at their request, the parable of the cockle of the field. Our Lord is not asked by His followers to explain the remaining parables, especially after hearing the parable of the sower, for it did not perhaps seem difficult.

In to-day's Gospel, then, the sense is, that something of same sort occurs with regards to Christ's Kingdom, as we see in the growth of the mustard-seed. Whether by the "Kingdom," we understand the Church, the Gospel, or the true faith, the meaning is the same. The increase of Christ's church, the spread of the Gospel, and the propagation of the faith are the result. Christ's little tiny seed was sown in weakness, but soon rose in power. The first beginnings were humble and insignificant.

The sower, Christ, was born in a stable, then driven into Egypt, then back to Nazareth, where He stayed till He was thirty years of age; then, for three years He preached up and down in the Holy Land, till at last He was sentenced to death as a malefactor and died upon the cross. His followers were illiterate, poor, rough fishermen of the Sea of Galilee. Their new style of preaching was opposed to the worldly wisdom, power and eloquence of the day. They were Jews and their Master was a Jew also. Yet a little while, and the seed began to grow. In less than a quarter of a century from the death of our Lord, the Gospel was generally diffused throughout the vast provinces of the Roman Empire, and the tidings of faith were told throughout the whole civilized world. St. Peter and St. Paul died by the sword in Rome, far from the Holy Land. In Rome, there are six hundred miles of catacombs — dug into the soft rock by men who were called the "fossores" — the diggers — and whose duty it was to dig the graves of the Christians, for almost three hundred years. I have been down in the catacombs, one tier below the other, a mute but eloquent memorial of past days in Rome. In less than three hundred years, Constantine himself was a Christian. St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ, lives in Rome still. Pius X governs three hundred millions of subjects

throughout the world — in Europe, Asia, Africa, the new continent of Australia, and North and South America, of every race and color. For example — one hundred years ago, there were but one hundred thousand Catholics in this country — now there are fifteen millions of them.

Verily, Christ reigns! And Christ will reign, till all the world shall be His, and there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The penitential season of Lent is near at hand. That we may prepare ourselves for it, the Church has instituted the season of Septuagesima upon which we enter to-day. During these three weeks we are expected to withdraw ourselves by degrees from the world and to consider the need we have of penance, in order that we may be duly impressed by the solemn warnings which will be given to us on Ash Wednesday.

The old Catholic notion of the duty of making reparation for sin by fasting and other practices painful to ease-loving nature is apparently falling into desuetude. The Church, out of consideration for the trying character of our climate and the trying kinds of labor in which many of our people are

engaged, has been lavish of dispensations; whence many persons conclude that Lent means little or nothing now in the way of self-denial. Moreover, Protestant ideas about the spiritual value of self-punishment as a form of reparation for sin, are creeping in among us. We are told that religion pure and undefiled has nothing to do with penitential practices, that God has provided the good things of life for our use and benefit and so on. The fact is that Our Lord fasted forty days, that He commends the austerities practiced by John the Baptist, and that St. Paul speaks of his watches and labors and fastings. Surely, if there is one duty of the Christian clearly defined in the Scriptures — one duty which has been faithfully observed by the saints of God in all ages of the Church, it is the duty of self-denial — not only when there is question of pleasures forbidden by God's law, but also of pleasures to which we have a strict right. The dispensations which the Church grants are not so sweeping in their scope as some easy-going Christians are pleased to think. The rigors of Lent have been softened, but the law of God about the duty of penance in one shape or another still stands.

In those who are indisposed to practice any works of bodily mortifications in the interests of their souls, the words of St. Paul in to-day's Les-

son ought to awaken misgivings. Here we see this man who had learned the Gospel he preached to the Gentiles, not from any man, but from the ascended Christ, who had been caught up into the heavens and had received other wonderful favors from God, whose life was one long series of labors and sufferings, telling his converts at Corinth that he chastised his body and brought it into subjection to the spirit, lest perhaps he might be cast off in the end by God. It was the Apostle's study to quell and gain a thorough mastery over the lusts of the flesh which fight against the law of the mind. If St. Paul was afraid, how much more should we fear,— we who are slaves to the demands of our bodies and who make little or no effort to deny ourselves after the example and precept of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul says he chastised his body. The expression he uses is curious. He looked upon his body as the boxer in the Corinthian games looked upon his adversary — i. e., as an enemy to be conquered only by mighty and well-directed blows, and the long list of the labors and sufferings he underwent in his missionary career gives us an insight into his meaning. "I bruise my body," he says, "so far as I can; I break down its desires, and, in addition, I strive to subject it to the law of reason." It is said by some commentators that in certain Greek public

games, the conqueror had the right to lead his adversary around the arena and to exhibit him as a slave. If we accept this explanation we get a singularly vivid idea of what St. Paul meant when he said that he brought his body into subjection. In any case, the Apostle's meaning is sufficiently plain. He made his body subject to his mind, obedient even as a slave, by not indulging in those things which provoke it to rebellion, by exercising it in temperance, mortification and other corporal austerities.

Let the stirring words and high example of the Apostle encourage us to prepare in a becoming spirit for the holy penitential season. Let us remember that we have many sins to atone for and that self-inflicted penance is the best token and evidence of true repentance. Again, self-inflicted penance will serve to shorten the expiation that must otherwise be made in Purgatory. Again, in view of the fact that we are prone to evil, we should remember that our only means of holding our ground against the flesh and its concupiscences is by sacrificing the flesh to the spirit. Let us fast if we can, not, however, trusting to ourselves to decide whether we can or not. Self-love is apt to warp our judgment. If we cannot fast let us deny ourselves at least food which ministers rather to the

pleasure of the palate rather than to the real needs of the body. Let us remember, moreover, that there are two other forms of penitential practice besides fasting, viz., prayer and alms-deeds, and that exemption from fasting does not mean that we are altogether exempt from Lenten observance. Let us be fervent in the great work of the purification of our souls, let us walk courageously in the path of penance so that each day the burden of our sins may be lightened, and that we may deserve at the end of our course to receive the incorruptible crown of eternal life.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

There are few more striking passages in the Holy Scriptures than St. Paul's apology for his conduct toward the faithful at Corinth. After his departure from that city, false teachers, moved either by jealousy of the Apostle or by the desire of fastening upon the converted gentiles the obligation of the Jewish law, tried to undo his work. They said that he had no right to claim the authority of an Apostle and that he preached a Gospel of his own contriving. They denounced him as an impostor, a fool and a madman. They said he was fickle, arrogant and

cowardly — strong and bold when he wrote from a safe distance, but in his speech and presence weak and contemptible. The result was that the Church at Corinth was exceedingly troubled.

Personally St. Paul cared nothing about what was said of him. He looked for commendation to God and not to men. But under the circumstances there was question of something far more important than his own reputation. In his solicitude for the interests of the truth and in his jealousy for the Corinthians, "I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God," he says — he puts aside humility for the moment, sets forth the power of his apostleship and commends himself and his labors that the Corinthians might be enabled to make comparisons between himself and his enemies. They had spoken of him as a fool and, with fine irony, he claims the privilege of commending himself after the manner of a fool.

We shall not, however, dwell longer upon the Apostle's vindication of his attitude towards the Corinthians. The points to which I shall invite your attention are contained in the closing verses of to-day's Lesson. After reciting the wonderful favors he had received from God, St. Paul tells us that, lest the greatness of these favors should puff him up, a sting of the flesh was given to him — a

trial so hard that he thrice sought deliverance from it, only to be assured that the divine grace was sufficient for him. What this "sting of the flesh" or "thorn to the flesh" really was is not certain. Some think that it was, as a passage in the Epistle to the Galatians seems to suggest, an affliction to the eyes. Others think that it was some form of bodily misery such as Satan was permitted to send upon holy Job. Others think that St. Paul was tormented by the devil as the saintly *cure* of Ars was in our own times.

Protestant Scripture scholars, in particular, have exercised themselves much in trying to decide what the Apostle's trouble was. The usual explanation adopted by spiritual writers is that "the sting of the flesh" was a temptation against holy purity, and this opinion, though open to many and weighty objections, is by recent Catholic commentators declared to be the most probable. Taking into account the details of his trial as given by the Apostle, and the end which he says God had in view in sending it, there is nothing else that can so fairly be supposed to be indicated as carnal concupiscence.

Temptation, its universality, God's designs in permitting it, and God's care for those who are beset by it, appear to be the points which the Apostle's confession is intended to bring to our notice.

Every child of Adam who has come to the use of reason, knows what temptation is. There is, as St. Paul tells us, a law in our members fighting against the law of our minds and striving to bring us under the domination of sin. Until this corruptible flesh is separated from our souls, we shall be assailed by temptation, unless by the singular mercy of God we are in one way or another exempted from it. And right here, let us remember that temptation is a word of twofold meaning. We read in Scripture that God tempted Abraham — which means that God tried his spirit — God did not "tempt" the patriarch in the bad sense of the word. We read again that God permitted Satan to "tempt" Job to blasphemy against Heaven. God gives Satan the same permission to-day, and Satan, though the world affects to have outgrown belief in a personal devil, is unwearied in his efforts to allure men from the paths of salvation into the way that leads to destruction. He coaxes people to commit sin. He encourages them to abide in sin even to the extent of despair. He shrank not from tempting our Blessed Lord, Who, in the desert, felt all the bitterness of sin without its guilt. He tempts with increased vigor those who have escaped from his dominion. He tempts us by appeals to

our passions, which he reaches through the senses. If these passions are so inflamed that to gratify their promptings we consent with our wills to evil, the devil has conquered us. If, despite all his efforts, we refuse to yield, the victory is ours.

The great thing for us to bear in mind is that temptation, no matter how violent or long-continued or humiliating in its character, is never a sin and is therefore not of itself a matter that need be mentioned in confession. The next thing is that God, by whose will temptation comes to us, will give us the grace to overcome it. He suffers none to be tempted beyond their strength. If we coöperate faithfully with His grace sin will never gain dominion over us. Every act of resistance is an act of Christian virtue which will add another jewel to our crown. Temptation is inevitable — let us not be surprised or cast down by it. Temptation is a means of sanctification. St. Paul found it so. Temptation can only be overcome by the grace of God. Let us, therefore, every morning before beginning the day's work, and sometimes during the day, ask that grace in earnest prayer. Last of all, let us remember that God's promise that His grace is sufficient for those who are tempted, applies not to those who rush into temptation — to those who

willfully and needlessly expose themselves to near occasions of sin. It is written that he who loves the danger shall perish therein.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

The Church presents for our consideration today St. Paul's splendid panegyric on Charity. He outlines for us its necessity, he tells us the signs by which we can know whether we possess it or not and he concludes by asserting its preëminence over the great virtues of faith and hope. Faith is given to us for the term of our natural life. It will have no more place when we enter upon the vision of God and know as we are known. Hope will end when we enter upon the possession of those things to which we now look forward. But charity is immortal. This is eternal life, to know God and the Son whom God hath sent. Knowing God, the source of all goodness and beauty, we shall love Him with an ever-deepening love.

From one end of the year to the other the Church is continually reminding us, and now by the words of His Apostle, of the absolute necessity of charity and of the motives which should lead us to practice it. It is the very crown and perfection of the Christian character. Possessing it we are rich in

every virtue, in honesty, chastity, mildness, generosity and truth. Jesus Christ tells us that the entire law of God is summed up in the two commandments of the love of God and of our neighbor. We must love God because in the first place He has charged us to do so; in the second place because He is infinitely good and deserving of all our love; and, in the third place, because of His loving-kindness and bounty towards us. We must love our neighbor, because all men are with us the children of God, all men are our brethren in Jesus Christ. More than this, Our Lord has given us a specific precept concerning brotherly charity. "This is My commandment that you love one another. I give you a new commandment that you love one another as I have loved you." "By this shall men know that you are My disciples if you love one another." Our Lord warns us that the man who says he loves God and hates his neighbor is a liar. Now this charity which Our Lord inculcates must show itself in a practical way. "My little children," says the Beloved Disciple, "let us love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." We take little account of that friendship which confines itself to expressions of regard. In all consistency we ought to take care lest we allow ourselves to do likewise. There are, of course, times when brotherly sym-

pathy must confine itself to words, and when a kindly word brings much consolation to the afflicted. But our charity must show itself in actions when actions are in order. We cannot banish sorrow and grief from the earth, but we can lighten the lot of those who sorrow and grieve.

We can be a staff to the lame and an eye to the blind. We can reconcile men to the inequalities of life which are the outcome of varying degrees of opportunity, ability and bodily strength and which, therefore, can never be abolished by schemes of social regeneration. It is hardly necessary for me to remind you that mere human kindness as such does not fulfill the law of charity. If we aim in doing good to our fellow-men, merely to gratify our natural kindliness, if we seek only the gratitude of those whom we benefit, if we are actuated only by what is called the promptings of humanity, we have not what is called the charity of Christ. Christian charity looks to God as the inspiration and reward exceeding great of all merciful deeds. Philanthropy is one thing, charity is quite another thing. We may, as St. Paul tells us at the beginning of to-day's Lesson, give all our substance for the relief of the poor, and deliver our bodies to be burned, but unless we have charity, our sacrifices will profit us nothing.

Lent will soon be here, the season of spiritual renovation. How have we kept the first and greatest commandment of loving God, since the penitential ashes were last laid upon our heads? We recite the act of charity at the appointed times, and we may actually feel a certain tenderness of emotion when we say it. But are our actions in accord with our profession of love for God? Perhaps we have no mortal sins upon our conscience, but, how about our habits of deliberate venial sin. If obedience to God's law be the test of charity, may not pious professions of some of us be fairly likened to the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal of which the great Apostle speaks.

It is written in the Gospel that we must love all men. If we do good only to those who do good to us, how much better are we than the heathens? It is written, moreover, that we must love all men, not merely in word, but in work and in truth. Now, let us, in the light of St. Paul's account of the characteristics of brotherly charity, examine into our way of life. "Charity," says the Apostle, "is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up, is not ambitious; seeketh not her own; is not provoked to anger; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all

things and endureth all things." If you are quick to anger, given to meeting temper with temper and violence with violence, making no allowance for the infirmities of others, you surely fall short of St. Paul's ideal. If you are given to envy, that meanest of the passions — to envy which prompts men to see in God's bounty to others a wrong done to themselves and even inspires them to commit sins of speech or action whereby a brother's good fortune may be blessed, surely the charity of Christ does not abide in you. If you despise those of your brethren who have received less from God than you have received, whether in temporals or spirituals, you are not actuated by the spirit of Christian brotherhood. If you are given to brooding over real or fancied injuries, refusing to forgive and forget, you abide in death.

As you see, brethren, St. Paul has given us the standard by which we may easily test the sincerity of our pretensions to charity. Let us apply that standard and judge ourselves before God calls us hence for judgment. Let us during the Lenten season be mindful of our many violations of the immortal virtue and beg of God the grace to enable us henceforth to love Him in work and in truth and to be of good will the one towards the other. Thus, and thus alone, shall we fulfill the law of Christ.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

The holy season of Lent, in which we are to renew ourselves in spirit, begins solemnly to-day. During the three weeks that have just passed, the Church reminded us of the great duties of the Christian life that we might realize our many shortcomings. There is one fact which, flatter ourselves as we may, we cannot disguise from ourselves, and that is the fact that we are all sinners. Now sin calls for penance and expiation. Our Lord has told us that unless we do penance we shall perish.

Let us take seriously to heart the invitation which the Church extends to us in the words of the great Apostle. She implores us to make our peace with God. She exhorts us not to receive in vain the grace which God holds out to us. "Behold," she says, "now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation. Lay hold of the opportunities which are within your reach." We have heard this invitation year after year without greatly heeding it. Let us no longer tempt the Lord our God. Let us no longer presume upon His divine patience, for the greater His forbearance the greater His wrath in the end.

God is at all times attentive to the prayer of the penitent sinner. "When thou shalt be touched

with the repentance of thy heart and return to Him, the Lord, thy God, wilt show mercy to thee." But there are special seasons when the Church labors to bring home to us the folly, the misery and the ingratitude of sin, when God seems to knock more loudly at the door of the sinner's heart. Lent is first among these special seasons of grace. Lent is here and let us yield ourselves body and soul to the spirit of the season. Penance consists in two things, viz., contrition of the soul and mortification of the body. The body is the instrument of the soul in the commission of sin. And the Church tells us that the repentance of the heart will not be accepted by God, unless it be accompanied by bodily austerities. To encourage us to the practice of these austerities she holds up before us in Sunday's Gospel the history of the forty days' fast of Jesus Christ in the wilderness. Fasting and abstinence are the first of these austerities. To them must be joined prayer and alms-deeds.

As fasting includes all kinds of mortification, so prayer includes all those exercises of piety whereby the soul is joined to God. Alms-deeds comprise all those works whereby we manifest our charity for our neighbor — works which God has told us He looks upon as if they were done unto Himself. "Prayer," said Raphael to Tobias, "is good with

fasting and alms, better, even, than to lay up treasures of gold, for alms delivereth from death and purge away sins and make one to find mercy and everlasting life." The situation is very simple. We are sinners — we need penance. This is the time for penance. Fasting, alms-deeds and prayer are the works of penance. In God's name let us do then according to the measure of our opportunity and ability. Let us not allow ourselves to be led astray by Protestant notions about the need and utility of penitential observance or by the devil's suggestion that we postpone conversion to some future time. Now — now is the acceptable time. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord and defer it not from day to day, lest His wrath come upon thee and in the hour of His vengeance He destroy thee." Woe to those who make God's mercy a pretext for perseverance in sin. There is a text of Holy Scripture which Christians, who act in this way, ought to find suggestive. "You shall seek Me, but shall not find Me and you shall die in your sins." God is not mocked, and, if we make little of the pardon that is now held out to us, the time will surely come when we shall ask pardon in vain. Away, then, brethren, with all foolish presuming upon the goodness and mercy of God, away with all delay in the matter of being converted to Him. God has prom-

ised pardon to those who repent, but He has not promised pardon to those who make His willingness to do so an excuse for obstinacy in evil ways. If to-day you hear His voice, harden not your hearts, lest in His wrath He swear with regard to you as He swore with regard to the heedless Israelites whose hearts were perverse and who would not walk in His ways, that you shall not enter into His rest. If to-day you hear the Son of God knocking at the door of your heart, once His elect dwelling place, but from which you have cast Him out by sin, open to Him. Be not obstinate, lest, perhaps, He depart never to return. The grace of God has its moments and those who, like Jerusalem, know not the day of their visitation, shall be left desolate. Defer not conversion, then, those of you who are at enmity with God. Let not the sinful pleasures of life so beguile you as to make you forget your duty and your destiny as the sons of God. Let the making of a good confession be the uppermost concern in your minds during this holy season. And, as some satisfaction to the majesty of God, let your repentance manifest itself in works of self-denial, of increased devotion and of alms-deeds. If you cannot with due regard to your health and for the duties of your state in life, practice abstinence from food, even on the small scale which the Church in

consideration for our bodily well-being prescribes — at least deny yourself the pleasures of life — abstain from food which ministers rather to the delight of the palate than to the strength of the body — from all manner of strong drink — from all amusements which are not in accord with the spirit of the time, such as theater-going, dancing parties and card-parties.

To show you in what spirit the Church wishes her children to keep the forty days of penance let me give you the following version of the hymn which is said in the morning office for Lent.

"Let us observe this most solemn fast of forty days which has been handed down to us by tradition. The Law and the Prophets first introduced it, and afterwards Christ the Master and Maker of all seasons consecrated it by His own observing it. Let us be more sparing in our words; let us retrench somewhat of our food, and drink, and sleep, and merriment, and watch over ourselves carefully. Let us shun those evil things which play havoc with unguarded souls and let us avoid all that could strengthen the tyranny of our crafty enemy. Let us appease the anger of our Judge and pour out our tears before Him. Let us prostrate ourselves and thus cry to Him in supplicant prayer.

"We have offended Thy goodness, O God, by

our sins. Forgive us and pour out Thy mercy upon us. Remember that we are the work of Thy hands, frail though we be. We beseech Thee, suffer not another to usurp the honor of Thy name. Pardon us the evil we have done and grant us good things even beyond our prayer; that we may be well-pleasing to Thee now and forever."

O Blessed Trinity! O undivided Unity! Grant us, Thy servants, to reap fruit from the fast Thou hast given us. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

The Epistle to the faithful at Thessalonica, now known as Salonica, in Turkey, is the first letter which has come down to us from the pen of the Apostle. St. Paul loved those people very dearly. They were separated from him in body, he says, but not in heart. Their fidelity to his teaching and loyalty to himself despite many false reports that had been spread among them, filled his soul with joy. He writes to them many words of approbation with which, however, are mingled a few rebukes couched in the form of exhortations to brotherly charity, faithfulness to the duties of their state, confidence in the resurrection of the body and purity of morals.

The words which I have chosen as the text for to-day, "This is the will of God, your sanctification"— are usually taken in their widest sense, although, as the connection in which they occur plainly shows, the Apostle is speaking of holiness of a very special kind.

"This is the will of God, your sanctification." "For God," the Apostle continues, "hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification. Therefore, he that despiseth these things — (the precepts of the Lord) — despiseth not man but God." The great thing that God demands of us is goodness — holiness. We are to be perfect as Our Heavenly Father is perfect. God has given us His Son, a model to conform to; He holds out to us in fullest measure the grace necessary to attain to sanctification, and His command that we seek holiness is unmistakable. Nor may we rest content with a low degree of Christian perfection. He that is just must be juster still, and he that is holy must sanctify himself yet more. God who has made us to His own image and likeness, wishes us to adorn our souls in which that likeness is, with those virtues which are, in a sense, a participation in the Divine perfection. He wishes us day after day to grow in grace as we grow in age, increasing in faith, hope, charity, patience, humility, resignation,

avoiding all manner of ungodliness and worldly desires, and living soberly, justly, and piously, till we are called hence. There are many people who think that so long as they stand well before the world they ought to stand well with God. They flatter themselves that because they are no worse than their neighbors, eternal life will be theirs as a matter of course. They go to church, if not too busy or too lazy, on Sundays, hang up their religion with their Sunday clothes when Mass is over and devote the interval that must elapse before Sunday comes again, to the worship of Mammon, to indulgence in their usual habits of sin, as heedless of God and of the one thing necessary as are the beasts of the field that know not why they were made. To Christians of this stripe let me earnestly commend St. Paul's saying: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." Let me remind them that God has given us His law — written it on the fleshly tables of our hearts. God sent His Son into the world to teach us by His words and example how we should live. Christ instituted His everlasting Church endowed by Him with the teaching, priestly and legislative office and guided all days even to the end of the world by the Spirit of truth. Why is the Gospel preached to you Sunday after Sunday? Why must the priests of the

Church be fruitful and diligent dispensers of His sacraments? Why is it that conscience insists on speaking whether you hear it or not?

Simply because God wants you to be good and holy. And as the fig tree, which ought to have brought forth good fruit, was threatened with destruction by the lord of the vineyard because it remained barren despite all the labor spent on it, so we who, despite all the aids and encouragements to a holy life which we enjoy, remain heedless of the divine command, are threatened with the wrath of the Most High. Wherefore, brethren, look to yourselves, so that every day as it passes will find you not only nearer to death and judgment, but more and more conformed to the example of Christ and the Saints.

I remarked at the start that our text, though commonly taken as referring to holiness of life in general, really refers to purity. That is clear from the general tenor of to-day's Lesson. The subject, though distasteful and difficult, is most important. Let us, therefore, briefly consider it. The desires of the flesh from which St. Paul, as he confesses to the Corinthians, was not exempt, is the strongest passion in our nature. It was implanted in man to ensure the multiplication and continuance of the race and, before the Fall, was in per-

fect obedience to the dictates of reason. Since the Fall, unlawful indulgence in it has been the crying sin of all the ages — and has done more to fill hell than all other sins put together. Somehow, it is in the sight of God the foulest of human transgressions. God has given us two commandments in the interests of holy purity. The sixth precept of the decalogue forbids all impure looks, words and actions; the ninth forbids all thoughts and desires contrary to the angelic virtue.

It is not necessary nor is it prudent in speaking on this subject to descend to details. There is danger lest in correcting those who sin, one may scandalize the innocent. The first thing to bear in mind is that temptations against the holy virtue, no matter how vile, how violent or long continued they be, are not sins. The second is that every sin against holy purity is mortal when it receives full consent. The consideration which is called smallness of matter, which has weight where there is question of justice, for example, has no weight in this connection. Nor does the fact that sinful indulgence is only brief, excuse the sinner. The least taint of impurity renders him who is guilty of it an outcast from the face of God.

With regard to offences against the Sixth Commandment, I would warn you against what old-

fashioned people style bawdy discourse, and in particular against obscene jokes. The man or the woman who, especially in the presence of persons of the other sex, indulges in immodest language defiles his or her own soul and does the work of the devil — is a sower of iniquity. With regard to offences against the Ninth Commandment, let me remind you that sins of thought are of three classes. First, there is deliberate pleasure in the thought of past sinful indulgence. Second, there is the deliberate desire of sinful indulgence. Third, there is deliberate harboring of sinful imaginations. Moreover, there are three distinct steps in the genesis of sins of thought: 1, the suggestion or the simple idea of evil which arises in the mind, 2, the agreeable impression which such ideas usually call forth, 3, the consent. If the will refuses consent there is no sin. If the will, however, gives consent, even though for a moment only, a mortal sin has been committed.

If we are to avoid impurity we must watch over our eyes lest we see iniquity, our ears lest we hear it, and our imaginations. All evil acts have their beginnings in the heart. Our Lord tells us that from the heart came forth evil thoughts, adulteries and fornications — and all those other things that defile a man. A fruitful source of sins of thought

is bad literature. Books are written for popular delectation, in which the most shameless irregularities of fallen nature are described with salacious elaborateness. There are public shows which few can frequent without peril of grievous sin. And, in the name of art, things are perpetrated which are an outrage on Christian decency. Beware of all these things, for impurity lays waste the soul, kills faith and even destroys the health of the body.

Remember, brethren, your dignity as Christians. Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost and the Lord will destroy those who violate those temples. Avoid all occasions of sin. Avoid idleness, for the idle brain is the devil's workshop. If, perchance, you fall, abide not in sin. Be earnest in prayer, and say often the little ejaculation, "Keep, O Lord, my heart and my body pure." Remember that none shall ascend into the mountain of God and stand in His holy place save those who are clean of soul and abstain from all manner of lust.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

In to-day's Lesson the Apostle gives us a pointed warning against the vice of avarice. He roundly declares that those who are given to it are guilty of idolatry. His words should be seriously consid-

ered by all those who find in themselves too strong an attachment for money. This vice is usually the besetting sin of old people as the pursuit of pleasure is usually the besetting sin of the young. The words of the Apostle remind us of what Our Lord said, in the Sermon on the Mount, about the impossibility of serving God and Mammon. They who give themselves up to the getting and hoarding of money as their end, do not love God. They become hardened against the dictates of justice and the promptings of charity. In their lives we see verified the truth of the Scriptural saying that the love of money is the root of all evil. Hence the Wise Man prays that God may not give him riches lest, perhaps, being puffed up he may be tempted to ask, "Who is the Lord?" Hence, too, the Psalmist says, if riches flow in upon thee, set not thy heart upon them. Even from the point of view of common sense alone, avarice is a foolish and unlovely vice. The old pagan moralists are never more eloquent than when they denounce it.

Avarice is an inordinate craving for worldly goods which makes a man not only strive after them but refuse to share his possessions with the poor. This craving is inordinate when a man strives to gain more than he needs for himself and his family, and is never content no matter how

much his gains. The miser, pure and simple, clings to what he has. The covetous man is not only niggardly in keeping, but unsatisfied in getting. His hand is ever extended to receive but is never stretched out to give. His desires are ever enlarging in proportion to the increase of his wealth. His eye is, as Holy Scripture says, insatiable. New gains bring him new solicitude and losses bring disquiet and vexation of mind. There are two degrees of avarice. The first is found where a man so loves money as to use unjust means to procure it, such as lying, perjury, sacrilege, oppression of the poor, robbery, stealing. In such cases is verified the Scriptural saying, "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for to love it is to set up even one's own soul for sale." Greed of money fills the streets with thieves, the markets with cheats, the law courts with perjurers, the hearts of the poor with sorrow, and the prisons with criminals. The second degree of avarice, which by the world is often commended as carefulness, thrift, prudence, etc.— though it ought to be called by less flattering names — does not impel its slaves to acts of downright injustice, but consists in too ardent a yearning for dollars and too close a hold on them when they are secured.

Now, brethren, we shall be mistaken if we fancy

that avarice is a vice peculiar to the rich. Among the wealthy we often find men who are poor in spirit and who, according to the promise of Christ, will one day possess heaven. Having freely received, they freely give. They regard themselves as stewards of the divine bounty, and their reward is great, even in this life. But if we often find liberality among the rich, we still oftener find avarice among the poor. As I have told you before, a man can bury his heart quite as deeply in a little house-lot as he could in a thousand acres, and we need not look very far to find illustrations of the truth of the remark. It is good and praiseworthy for a poor man to strive that his children may be spared his struggles with poverty — that they may attain to a higher social standing than his own. But when in his desire to get ahead in the world, he neglects his religious duties, lies, cheats, turns Sunday into a day of labor, takes advantage of his neighbor whenever opportunity offers, refuses to do his part in relieving the necessities of his less prosperous brethren, refuses to contribute according to his means for the support of his religion and its ministers, his conduct is no longer good or praiseworthy. He is making money his god, he is an idolator, and he will not, as St. Paul tells the Corinthians, possess the kingdom of God. Our Lord tells us that if we

love anything more than Him we are not worthy of Him. Surely they who serve Mammon come under this sentence. Parents of this sort sometimes feel the anger of God in this world. The children for whose sake they neglect the one thing necessary and despise the divine warnings, turn out unworthy of the sacrifices that have been made for them, and, living riotously, waste what their father shortened his life and sacrificed his soul to accumulate.

Brethren, it ought to impress us to find St. Paul setting down avarice along with fornication and adultery and drunkenness, as sure to exclude them who practice it from the Kingdom of God. Let us not set our hearts upon possessions which death will defeat us of. Naked we came into the world and naked we shall go out of it. The millionaire, like the beggar, has nothing at the end but his shroud, his coffin and his grave. "The most effective remedy for avarice," says St. Augustine, "is to think daily of death." Seek after virtues, for they are the treasures which thieves cannot steal, which moths and rust cannot consume, which death cannot rob us of, and which endure until life everlasting. Remember the parable which Our Lord spoke as a warning against covetousness. The rich man laid up goods, as he thought, for many years. But God said to him: "Thou fool,

this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God."

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

This Sunday, mid-Lent Sunday, is called *Lætare* Sunday from the first word of the proper of the Mass, which means rejoice. The Church wishes all the faithful to rejoice as we draw near to the festival on which we shall commemorate the crowning mercy of our redemption. On this day she relaxes somewhat from the mournfulness of the penitential season; the organ, which, strictly speaking, should have been silent from the beginning thereof, is permitted to be played, and the violet-colored vestments are exchanged, where such change is practicable, for rose-colored vestments in accordance with ancient custom.

A special reason for rejoicing is given in the Lesson for this day. This Lesson is not easy to explain in detail, but the gist of it is evident enough. The Apostle labors to impress upon the Galatians the fact that, as children of the Church of Christ, they are not bound by the many and grievous laws of the old Jewish Covenant. He tells them that

they are free, because Christ hath made them free, and he exhorts them to stand fast and be not brought again under the yoke of bondage. These Galatians were converts from heathenism. The Jewish rites were hateful to them. They objected to bearing in their flesh the seal of the Mosaic Law, which false teachers, who came among them after the departure of St. Paul, tried to impose upon them, preaching another Gospel, which, as the Apostle said, was not a Gospel at all. They were excited and began to waver in the faith. They disputed with one another so fiercely that St. Paul reproaches them for biting and devouring one another. His Epistle to these "foolish Galatians," as he calls them, is the most vigorous of his writings. He aims to impress upon them these two points: First, his own plenary authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and, second, the fact that they had been emancipated from the law of fear.

There is a great deal in the New Testament about Christian liberty — the freedom of the faith. In the Gospel of St. John, Our Lord says, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." St. Paul speaks in one passage about the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He tells again that where the spirit of God is, there is liberty. St. James speaks of the law of liberty whereby we shall

be judged. What is this liberty in which the Church bids us rejoice to-day? In the early days of the faith there were heretics who contended that Christians were not bound by any laws, human or divine. They thought themselves justified in indulging in the most unbounded licentiousness. This was as St. Peter calls it making liberty "a cloak for malice." This was what St. Paul called making liberty an occasion to the flesh. For Christ has said, "if you wish to enter into eternal life keep the Commandments." But some will ask how children of the Church can be called "free" if they must observe laws and precepts. How could Jesus Christ say that the truth will make us "free" and then tell us to take up his yoke? Is not "the glorious liberty of the Sons of God" something of a misnomer?

The trouble is that our notions of liberty and freedom are defective. We are not free in the sense that we may have our own way in everything without let or hindrance. The children of the Church are "free" in this, that Jesus Christ has delivered them from the bondage of sin and darkness and given them power by means of His grace to attain to their destiny. As the sailor is none the less free because of the compass by whose aid he steers his course over the sea, because of the lights that

mark dangerous places, because of the wind that carries him along his course, so we are none the less free in that we are guided by the light of faith, directed by the commandments, and are assisted by divine grace.

The freedom wherewith Christ has made us free consists, in part at least, in this, that He has delivered us from that law in our members which fights against the law of our mind and strives to bring us into the commission of sin. God made us for Himself. Thanks to the sin of our first parents, the passions of our nature which, while man was in the state of original justice, were under the complete domination of right reason, are, from the dawn of understanding to our latest conscious movement, continually striving for gratification. Fallen nature wants to have its own way. We know by sad experience that if we yield to its promptings we cease to be masters of ourselves. Living freely we part with our freedom. We fall under the dominion of the world, the flesh and the devil. And every man or woman who leads a life of self-indulgence knows what this dominion means. There is no slavery like the slavery of habits of sin.

Now the "liberty of the Son of God," over and above the fact that we have been released from the

old law of fear, consists in this, that Jesus Christ has, in calling us to His faith, delivered us from the bondage of doubt and unbelief under which so many millions of our fellow-men are groaning. By His Church He makes known to us those truths which give a meaning to life and an illumination to death. While others are seeking for light and guidance, we, relying on the authority of the Church, and undisturbed by doubts and difficulties, journey on, strong in faith and hope. Outsiders may scoff at us — though secretly envying us — and talk to us about liberty of conscience and a man's right to think as he pleases. We find the yoke sweet, and its burden light. We see no more slavery in submitting to the infallible Church than we see in the sailor's submitting himself to his compass and to the unchanging stars.

The liberty of the Sons of God consists, furthermore, in this — that Jesus Christ, by His grace, has purchased for us the freedom of the spiritual part of our nature from the bonds of our passions, has taught us to bind in chains our lower self, to repress the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, so that we can, if we will, walk steadfastly in the path which faith and reason alike point out to us as the right one. Passion is strong, but grace is stronger. Habits

bind us in fetters, but the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, is mighty to deliver us.

Let us, brethren, beware of confounding liberty with license. Let us rejoice in God's help and guidance. Let us accept cheerfully the precepts which he has given to us that, by their observance, we may attain to our end. Let us make use of the means of grace whereby we are enabled to overcome the tyranny .of fallen nature. And let us sometimes think upon the pregnant phrase of St. Augustine, "Love God and do as you like."

PASSION SUNDAY

To-day we enter upon the solemn season of the Passion. During the time which will elapse between now and Good Friday the Church wishes us to bear continually in mind the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Everything around us urges us to mourn. The images of the saints and the crucifix itself are veiled from our sight. The prayers and rites of the next two weeks are designed to fill us with sorrow for the passion and death of our Saviour, and with contrition for the many sins by which we, brethren, made ourselves sharers in the awful crime of the slayers of the Just One. The Church knows that the great anniversary of Calvary has a reno-

vating power for those who avail themselves of the graces which it brings. She knows that our love for Jesus Christ will be increased if we remember that he died for us.

"We have known the charity of God," says St. John, "because He hath laid down His life for us." She knows that our sorrow for sin will be deepened when we realize that our transgressions helped to make heavier still the burden of pain and grief which was laid down upon the Redeemer of the world, and that our zeal for the salvation of our souls will be kindled when we remember at what a price we have been redeemed.

The opening words of to-day's office—"if ye shall hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts," give us a hint of what the Church of God expects of us during this Passion season. We are to follow Our Lord in spirit from the moment when he began to be in agony in Gethsemane, to the moment when He resigned His spirit into the hands of His Father. We are to watch Him not as the hardened and indifferent soldiers did, who assisted at the Crucifixion, but rather like as the chosen few watched Him, who stood beneath the cross.

The Lesson for this day is taken from the sublime Epistle to the Hebrews. It presents to us Christ the Great High Priest, who at the end of

the ages, appeared for the destruction of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The writer brings before our minds an impressive picture of the Mediator of the New Testament by way of contrast with offices of sacrifice performed under the ancient law — offices which were but figures of the reality promised in the beginning. Once a year the successors of Aaron entered into the innermost sanctuary of the Temple, bearing in their hands the blood of goats or calves whereby those who were legally defiled were sanctified to the cleansing of the flesh. That rite had no power to cleanse the souls of men from the stains of sin. But when the fullness of time was come, the Incarnate Son of God, entering into the sanctuary of Heaven, offered his own precious blood to His Father to atone for the iniquities of us all, and by the infinite merits of that offering, purchased salvation for all those who, through faith, are united to Him.

We should consider the Passion from two points of view. It is on the one hand the manifestation of the love which the Son of God had for all the sons of men. It is, moreover, a pattern which we are to copy.

St. John tells us that when Jesus Christ stood by the grave of Lazarus He wept. Those who saw Him said to each other, "Behold how He loved

him." Now brethren, when we see Jesus Christ shedding not merely a few tears, but pouring out the last drop of His blood for sinners that he might deliver them from the eternal death, how can we do otherwise than cry out with all the admiration and gratitude of which we are capable. "Behold how he loved us." The angels offended but once and in thought only. God condemned them to everlasting sorrow. That we, who have followed them in disobedience have not fallen under a like condemnation is due not to any merits of our own but simply and surely to the infinite mercy of God, who sent into this world His only begotten Son, born of woman, to make that atonement which we could not make — to blot out the hand-writing that was against us — to secure for us plentiful redemption.

Christ might have redeemed us by a single tear or a single act of penance. His least humiliation, being the act of a Divine Person, was of infinite value. But — and this is the great thought of the Passion-tide — what would have satisfied God's justice could not satisfy His love. Christ came, as He said, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. One drop of His blood was more than enough to redeem us, but He chose to be humbled for us even to the death of the cross. It was His love for us that made Him undergo the cruel scourging;

that made him submit to be crowned with thorns; that made infinite power to be led in bonds; that made infinite wisdom to be clothed in a fool's coat; that made Him to be reputed among thieves and murderers; that made Him exchange the glory of His Father's house for the shame and anguish of Calvary. That He did all this was, as the Apostle says, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness. That He was to do it had been proclaimed by the Prophets of Israel long before His coming. He prophesied His own death according to the Scriptures but no man understood Him, and after His Resurrection He was at pains to show the two disciples, who thought that the Messiah would come in glory to liberate Israel from bondage to the Gentiles, that what had happened was precisely what was to happen. "O foolish and slow of heart to believe all the things which the Prophets spoke. Ought not Christ to have suffered all these things and so to enter into His glory? And, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him." If, then, you wish to understand something of God's love for you, brethren, look at your crucifix. And, "if today you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts."

Our Lord's Passion is, moreover, a pattern to which we must conform. St. Peter says, "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps, Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly; Who, in His own self, bore our sins in His body upon the tree; that we, being dead to sin, should live to justice; by whose strife you were healed." Christ's whole life was a model, but all the lessons thereof were crowded together in those hours of anguish between His bloody sweat in the garden and His last words upon the cross. He submitted patiently to the will of His Father, leaving us an example of patient submission to the mysterious decrees of Divine Providence. He died for all men, though He knew that many would treat Him with malice and ingratitude. He was patient and meek and gentle.

He emphasized, in dying, the lesson He had so often taught during His life, viz., that we must forgive our enemies. Let that example be not lost upon us, brethren. Forgive your neighbor if he hath wronged you, and then your sins will be forgiven when you pray. He that seeks revenge upon his neighbor shall taste the vengeance of the Lord,

Who will surely keep his deeds in remembrance. He that showeth not mercy shall find no mercy.

During this holy season read and consider the story of the Passion as it is related in the Holy Gospels. Take one point at a time and meditate upon it. Take for example the betrayal of Christ. You know something of the bitterness of soul that oppressed you when someone in whose friendship you trusted, became, of a sudden, your enemy. You know how you feel to find yourself accused of evil which you did not do. That will help you to realize the sorrows of Gethsemane when the Lamb of God, guiltless of all offence, found Himself burdened with all the sins of the world. This is the spirit in which the Church wishes to prepare for Good Friday. Thus, and thus only, can we fit ourselves to celebrate worthily the solemn commemoration of the world's redemption.

Let us learn from the contemplation of the Passion the great lesson of the malice of sin. Let us learn, after the example of our suffering Lord, to exercise, in all our afflictions, humble submission to the will of God. Let us praise and love Him who for love of us emptied Himself of His glorious fullness, humbled Himself that we might be exalted, and died that we might have immortality.

PALM SUNDAY

The virtue of humility is the subject suggested by to-day's Lesson. The Apostle had just been telling the faithful at Philippi that, if they wanted to give him, then a prisoner for the faith, any comfort, any evidence of their sincere heartfelt compassion for him, they must avoid contention and vainglory and practice humility and disinterestedness. In order the better to excite them to the exercise of these virtues he alleges the example of Jesus Christ — the supreme example of humility. You ought, he says, to have such dispositions in your souls as your Saviour had. He, though He had the nature of God, did not insist on His own equality with His Father, but humbled Himself, taking the form of man, being made like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted. He, the Creator, descended from heaven to live the life of His creatures.

He might have come to rule as a King; but He cast His lot with the poor and lowly. He came not to rule but to minister. To understand and measure His condescension we need to know the height and greatness of the Estate from which He descended. But this is not the whole story. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. He came to entreat men to avail themselves of His

infinite compassion and love. They, whose misery had kindled his pity, gave Him only scorn. They hardened their hearts against His appeals. They saw the sights and wonders which He did, and said that He performed them by the power of the devil. They persecuted him as a deceiver and a false prophet and finally they condemned him to death. Jesus Christ, Who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the Cross, is the pattern of humility which the Apostle proposes for the imitation not only of the Philippians, but of all who expect eternal life in His name.

Humility is a virtue which is often misunderstood. There are people who tell you that it is out of place in this busy, practical world which admires those who hold their heads high and trample under foot those who make little of themselves. They tell you that, though an excellent thing for religious, it is hardly to be expected of the ordinary Christian. Nevertheless, Our Lord says, "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." Holy Scripture tells us that humility is the path to glory and the science of the Saints; gives us many illustrations to its practice, and holds up for our consideration many men and women who are examples of it. Now what is humility? St. Bernard tells us that it is a species of justice. It is the virtue

which inclines the creature to give to God the glory which belongs to Him as the giver of every good and perfect gift. A man may have beauty of form, intellectual ability, wealth, power. Whence are these things? A man may lead a virtuous life and do many good works. Does the credit for these things belong to him? The fact is we are only a little dust held together by the power of God. Humility, as the word itself indicates, is the acknowledgment of our lowliness and helplessness and nothingness. Pride, which is the opposite vice, inclines us to claim all that glory for ourselves — to praise ourselves — to strive after esteem and notoriety — to imagine that we are superior to others and that the rest of men are not worthy to be compared with us — to exhibit our own importance.

We have all, perhaps, some little touch of pride, but as our eyes are made to look without rather than within, we are not aware of the fact. We can note the manifestations of it in others much more readily. And though we may not advert to the sin of it we can see its folly. We all know that whoever praises himself loses at once, in the minds of sensible men, the good opinion they had of him. "Pride," says Holy Scripture, "is hateful before God and men." But then again, what is humility? St. Thomas tells us that it is the virtue which checks and curbs

the mind that we may not run to excess after high things. It particularly regards the subjection of man to God, and the reason why Jesus Christ so earnestly commends it to us is because by it is removed the chief obstacle to our salvation. Man's salvation consists in tending to things heavenly and spiritual from which he is hindered by trying to magnify himself in earthly things. Truly is it written in the Book of Proverbs, "Where humility is, there is wisdom." The humble man is he who recognizes that he is nothing of himself, and that, whatever good there is in him, either in the order of nature or of grace, he has received it from God. Says St. Paul: "If any man thinks that he is something, whereas he is nothing, he deceives himself." Humility does not require us to shut our eyes to the gifts we have received; it merely forbids us to glory as if we had not received. It can exist along with a just estimation of our parts and endowments. According to these things which he has by the bounty of God, a man can and ought to esteem himself; according to those things which he has of himself, he ought to hold himself cheap. Our sins and shortcomings are the only things in us of which we can justly claim the credit. The virtue of humility finds expression, firstly, in acts of subjection toward others. The humble man does not inor-

dinately extol himself above others, does not strive to equal or surpass others in honor, submits to correction with good grace, does not refuse to serve others and bears, without bitterness of heart, slights and reproaches.

The Fathers tell us that humility is the foundation of all the virtues. Says St. Augustine: "The first virtue is humility; the second is humility; the third is humility, and the answer is the same no matter how many times you ask the question." And let me say just here that as by pride we can offend against this fundamental virtue, so can we sin against it by inordinate belittling of ourselves so as to neglect our duties to the injury of those whom we are bound to govern.

We are to be humble according to the dictates of common-sense and common justice and moreover because Jesus Christ has given us example and precept in this matter. "Learn of Me," He says, "for I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find rest to your souls."

There are three degrees of humility. The first is necessary for eternal salvation. It prompts us so to submit and humble ourselves as in all things to obey God's Will in such wise as never to enter into deliberation about breaking laws, human or divine, which bend under pain of mortal sin. The second

degree is more perfect than the first. It consists in so submitting and humbling ourselves as never to commit venial sins. The third degree is the most perfect humility. A man who has attained to this, and few they are, perhaps, desires to be esteemed as useless and foolish for Christ's sake — the better to imitate Him — rather than to be accounted wise and prudent by this world. It is of this third degree that worldly people speak when they say that there is no room for humility in the life of to-day. We may not feel disposed to put into practice the counsels of the Imitation. "Love to be unknown and to be rated as nothing," but we must, as we hope for heaven, practice humility in the first degree.

Beware, brethren, of false humility —"humility with a hook"— the pride that apes humility and which is the devil's favorite sin. There are people who belittle themselves with the deliberate purpose of gaining the admiration of others. Treat such people in the manner in which they pretend to desire to be treated; give them that lowest place which they affect to covet, and their wounded self-love will find prompt and pointed expression. When you obtain credit for anything which you do not possess, labor to disabuse those who praise you of their mistaken notions. Should you really possess admirable qualities and abilities which gain for you praise

and esteem, bless God for His bounty. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy name be the glory. Do not trumpet your own praises.

For the rest call to mind what the author of the "Imitation of Christ" says about the rewards of humility. "God protects and delivers the humble; He loves them and consoles them; He inclines himself to them; He bestows upon them the fullness of His graces; and after their humiliation, he raises them." "The greater thou art," say the Holy Scriptures, "the more thou shouldst humble thyself in all things and so thou shalt find favor with God. For great is the power of God and He is honored by the humble."

EASTER SUNDAY

"This is the day which the Lord hath made. Let us rejoice and be glad therein." By these words of the Psalmist, the Church seeks to impress upon us the spirit in which we should celebrate this greatest feast of the whole Christian year. On Christmas Day we rejoiced in the coming of the long-awaited Redeemer. On Easter day we exult in the Redeemer's fulfillment of the work which His Father gave Him to do, namely the deliverance of mankind from the bonds of sin and death.

How far removed from us, brethren, the events of Good Friday seem. On that day we stood at the foot of the cross with Mary and John the Beloved, watching the bitter agony of the Son of God. We saw Him bow His head and die, we saw His side pierced with a lance to the end that His death might be assured. And when evening began to descend upon Calvary we saw Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus taking down the body of the Crucified, and having hastily prepared it for burial, because the great Sabbath was near at hand, placing it in the sepulcher which Joseph had prepared for himself. The enemies of Our Lord had apparently triumphed, but there was some little anxiety in their minds concerning Him even though they had compassed His death. They went to Pilate and told him that they remembered that Jesus of Nazareth had said while yet alive: "After three days I will rise again." They demanded that the Governor set a guard around the tomb till the third day lest the disciples might, as they said, steal away the body and so start a new error worse than the first. Pilate's answer was brief: "You have a guard. Go guard the tomb as you know." "Departing, they made the sepulcher sure," as the Gospel says, sealing the great stone that closed it. Meanwhile how was it with our Lord's chosen ones?

The very thing had happened that had been foretold. The shepherd had been stricken and the sheep had been scattered. Somehow the disciples had never understood that Christ's kingdom was not to be of this world. They fancied to the last that He was to redeem Israel, not from its iniquities, but from the rule of the stranger. When He died their faith in Him died also. It looked as if the cause of Jesus Christ were lost forever. Does it not seem strange that the enemies of the Lord had a better memory of what He had said than His own followers, and that the fear of His persecutors, that He might return, was stronger than the hopes of those men in whose hearing he had declared at least six times that He would die and live again? The care some of them took thoroughly to embalm His sacred remains, the incredulity of others when told that death no longer held dominion over Him, show that His Resurrection was the last thing they looked for.

Jesus Christ has said, "No man taketh my life away from me. I lay it down of myself and I have the power to take it up again." The first part of this saying He verified in Calvary. The second part was to be made good in due season. The light of the world had not been extinguished forever. It was to suffer eclipse for an appointed space and

then shine forth in eternal splendor. On the third day, as He had often promised, the Son of Man rose from the dead. The earth was shaken, the guards fled within the city affrighted, an Angel of God rolled away the stone from the empty sepulcher and the sorrows of the passion were swallowed up in the glory of Easter.

And how did this amazing event become known to the disciples? The Sabbath day, whose near approach presented the thorough embalming of Christ's body, ended on Holy Saturday evening. Those who had buried Him went out to buy more perfumes and spices wherewith to render the last offices of reverence and affection. As soon as the third day began to dawn certain holy women led by Mary Magdalen set out on their pious errand. They wondered, as they walked along the city streets, how they were to roll away the stone that closed the tomb, for it was very great. Evidently they knew nothing about the guards that had been posted by Our Lord's enemies. When they drew near they saw that the great stone had been rolled back. Magdalen, it seems from the Gospel account, sought Peter and John, without waiting to learn what had happened. "They have taken away the Lord out of His grave and we know not where they have laid Him," she said to the Apostles. At once

they hurried to the tomb, followed by Magdalen. In the meantime the holy women from whom Magdalen had separated, had approached the sepulcher. They saw within a vision of angels, one of whom said, "Fear not. I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord was laid; and going quickly tell His disciples and Peter that He is risen."

They departed quickly to fulfill the bidding of the angel. Presently John came, followed by Peter. John, being the younger man, arrived first, but did not enter till Peter had entered. They saw the winding sheet and the napkin which had been about the head of Christ lying on the ground. John tells us that he believed, but what he means is not altogether clear. Mary Magdalen had returned in the meantime full of sorrow over what she thought was the violation of her Master's grave. Looking into it she saw two angels sitting there, one at the head and the other at the feet where the sacred body had been laid. It is clear that she did not realize that they were angels. They asked her why she wept, and she told them, but they gave her no comfort. Turning away she presently became aware of a man who said "Woman why weepest thou, whom seekest thou? Her soul was filled with sorrow,

her eyes were dimmed with tears and in the uncertain light she did not recognize her questioner. She thought he was the keeper of the garden and said to him, "Sir, if you have taken Him hence, tell me and I will take Him away." The answer came in one word, "Mary." Oh, what rapture filled the heart of Magdalen when she recognized the voice that she never hoped to hear again. She sought the body of Jesus, it was the risen Jesus whom she found. "Rabboni" she cried. "Rabboni, Oh, my Master." She knelt at His feet, would fain have clasped Him but He gently forbade her. "Do not touch me, but go to my brethren and tell them what I say to you." And this was her message to the Apostles, "I have seen the Lord." But these men, sunk in despondency, would believe neither her nor the other women. Well did they deserve the reproach so often spoken by Jesus Christ, "O ye of little faith."

On Easter evening Christ appeared to two of his disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to a little town near the city. Presently a stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about and why they were so sad. Cleophas answered that they were talking about Jesus of Nazareth who had been lately crucified; that they thought He was going to redeem Israel; that cer-

tain women of their company reported that He had come to life again. The stranger reproved them for their foolishness and lack of faith and expounded to them the Scriptures wherein it was declared that the Christ must first suffer and so enter into His glory. When the two disciples arrived at Emmaus the stranger made as though he was going to leave them. But they begged Him to remain, and while at supper, their eyes were opened and they knew the Risen Lord. Returning to Jerusalem they told the Apostles what they had seen, and learned that Christ had appeared to Peter also. While they were talking Jesus came and said, "Peace be to you. It is I, be not afraid." They thought He was a Spirit but He bade them come and touch him. Then He called for something to eat and partook of some fish and honeycomb. Then he explained to them all that the prophets had foretold about His Passion and Resurrection. It was at this time that Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance. Breathing upon the Apostles He said Receive ye the Holy Ghost —"Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven and whose sins you shall retain they are retained."

The lessons of Easter are so many that, unless we single out one and dwell upon it, we are likely to let the great festival pass without being wiser or

better for its celebration. First of all, let me invite your attention to the privilege of Magdalen. Neither His Blessed Mother, nor the Beloved Disciple, nor yet Peter was the first to whom Our Savious appeared after His Resurrection. To Mary Magdalen, once a woman of the town, this favor was given. Let the fact bring home to sinners the love God has for those who repent — which is the great lesson of the parables of mercy. It would appear that God, over and above the grace of forgiveness, tries to recompense them for what they lost while separated from Him.

Again, there is a hint given us of the nature of the Sacrament of Penance, by the fact of its institution on the evening of Easter day. It is the Sacrament of Resurrection. By it, those who lie in the spiritual death of sin, bound by the bonds of evil habits, bereft of all power to do anything meritorious of eternal reward, are raised up to life and freedom — the glorious freedom of the sons of God. Those who have experienced this spiritual resurrection ought to remember that, as Christ rose from the dead never to die again, so their deliverance ought to be permanent. If you have risen with Christ, seek henceforth the things that are above, not the things of earth. Fix your eyes on Christ sitting in glory at the right hand of His Fa-

ther. For those who have not experienced spiritual resurrection let me exhort them to avail themselves of the graces that are at hand. "Why will ye abide in death, O House of Israel — when you may have life — if you will."

But the great lesson of Easter lies in this that the Resurrection proves Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and His faith a divine faith. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, says that Christ was declared to be the Christ by His return from the dead. The enemies of the Gospel in every age have seen the proving power of this miracle and have either tried to discredit Christ's death or to show that the Apostles only imagined that they beheld Him, being in earnest expectation of seeing Him on the third day. As to these points it will be enough to say that the death of Christ is a fact established beyond all question, and that, far from expecting the Resurrection, the Apostles believed in it only when they could no longer doubt the evidence of their own senses. But how does the miracle prove the Divinity of Christ? In one word it was the verification of the supreme proof which Our Lord offered of His own claims. He saved others, said His enemies. He could not save Himself. He did not deliver Himself out of the hands of His persecutors, but He did more. He delivered Himself from the grave to which they

had forever consigned Him. He had foretold that He would do so, and He fulfilled the prophecy. None but the Lord of life and death could have done what He did. And His act is an overwhelming proof of the Divinity of Christ's person and therefore of His mission. If He had not risen, then as St. Paul tells the Corinthians, we Christians would be, of all men, the most miserable. Our faith would be vain and preaching would have been vain. Without the Resurrection Christianity falls. It would rest upon the word of a man who failed to give the proof he promised to give of the reality of his claims to the obedience of men. The Apostles understood the proving power of the Resurrection and preached it everywhere and always.

It is then the foundation of our faith. It is the ground of our eternal hopes. As Christ rose from the dead, so shall all the children of men rise on the last day to share the glory of the risen Christ if they have kept His law and followed His example. Oh, brethren, what a blessed thought it is that these bodies of ours in which we have labored and suffered for Christ shall one day enter with our souls upon a glorious eternity. Let us give thanks to God for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; let us pray that our faith in His teachings may be deepened and that we may be Christians, not only in be-

lief, but in practice. Almighty and Eternal God, who, by the Resurrection of Thy Son, didst supply a sure foundation for our faith, grant that living up to its requirements we may, at the end, be admitted to share in the glory of Him who is the firstborn of the dead.

LOW SUNDAY

The Lesson just read to you is chiefly concerned with the merit and power of faith. Everyone that believeth in Jesus Christ is born of God, says the beloved disciple. Whosoever believes becomes a child of God, receives a new birth through sanctifying grace, which makes him, as St. Peter says, a partaker of the divine nature, fills him with joy and peace, and is the very root and foundation of all justification. "By grace you are saved through faith," says St. Paul. But it is rather with the power than with the merit of faith that we shall concern ourselves to-day. And its power is set forth by St. John in the impressive sentence: "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith."

St. John testifies against the "world" with frequency and emphasis in his first epistle. By the world he means, as it seems, the great mass of men

who, ignorant of or ignoring the teachings of the Gospel, are governed by the instincts, promptings and maxims of unregenerate nature. He looks upon the spirit of the "world" as the spirit of Antichrist, against which stands the spirit of Truth. He denounces it as he would denounce a false prophet. He warns Christians of every age and condition against conformity with worldly principles and forbids them to love the world and the things that are in it. "For," says he, "all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life." This three-fold concupiscence is the result of man's disobedience in the beginning. "God," as the Scripture says, "made man right." God gave him right ideas of life and destiny, and these ideas were not obscured by the turmoil of the passions as we know them. "God made man right," but man made himself what he is. And the "world," as we speak of it from the Christian point of view, is the aggregate of corrupted human nature. It is ranked in Holy Scripture as first in the trinity of the enemies of our salvation, the others being the flesh and the devil. We see its activity on every side. It is forever trying to wean men from obedience to God — forever seeking to make good seem evil and evil seem good — substituting selfishness for brotherly charity —

urging men to seek the things that are upon the earth rather than the things that are above the earth, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father — applauding success rather than Christian virtue, which it ridicules as weakness — and, in a word, insisting that the one thing necessary is not the salvation of our souls but rather the admiration of men. Generation after generation of our fathers lived and died without coming into contact with the "world," as thus understood. Strong in the faith, they endured scorn, oppression, even death itself, rather than be deprived of their hopes of heaven. If we are not careful the "world," with its principles so congenial, after all, to fallen nature will do for us what persecution failed to do for those whose sons we are. Strong in the faith, we must resist the world — that faith by which, as St. Paul says, the fathers and the prophets conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, recovered strength out of weakness and became valiant in battle.

Now, what does St. John mean when he says that our faith is the victory that overcometh the world? We might understand his words as referring to the triumph of the Church of Christ. Of course that triumph is still incomplete. There are countless millions who have not yet bowed before the cross or

taken upon themselves the yoke of Christ. The kingdom of God is not as yet conterminous with the kingdoms of the earth. But let us consider not what remains to be done but what has been done and what is now doing. The apostolic spirit is still active in the Christian ministry. Year by year the walls of the city of God are extended. The parable of the mustard seed is, in part, at least, fulfilled. Though princes have come together against the Lord and His anointed, and the nations have framed hostile counsels, the Church of Christ has gone on from conquest to conquest, sometimes checked but never dismayed, encouraged in the fulfillment of her mighty mission by the conviction that in the end there will be one fold and one shepherd.

But St. John's words may also be understood as applying to the triumphs of faith in the individual soul. Faith enables us to overcome the world, precisely because it keeps us expectant of another world and another life, according to the definition of St. Paul. "Faith is the substance (or presentation) of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." Faith teaches us that eternal life is the highest good and that everlasting death is the greatest evil, and that, therefore, we must bear with everything rather than transgress

the law of God. Of course, by faith in this connection is meant operative faith — not the dead faith of which St. James speaks and which has no influence on our daily conduct. Faith, enlivened by charity, supplies us with the motives which are all powerful in the spiritual combat wherein we are engaged. Whether the world prosecute us openly or wheedle us with appeals which flesh and blood find it hard to resist, our faith, if we heed its promptings, will give us the victory. It brings to our minds the awful truths of death, judgment, heaven, hell and eternity. It supports us in temptation by recalling to our minds the spectacle of the Son of God tempted in the desert. The world encourages us to sin and to persevere in sin by holding up to us the pleasures that sin brings. Faith overcomes the world by holding up to us the penalties of sin. The world holds up to us as the end of life the acquisition of the goods and honors of this world. Faith overcomes the world by reminding us that life means more than the acquisition of goods which we must soon be parted from forever — more than the applause of men which will soon die away into silence. The man of faith remembers that the services of God are not compatible with the services of Mammon. He recalls these words of the Apostle: "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek for

one to come." He knows that it will profit him nothing if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul. Sweet is the chink of gold and sweet is the homage of men. But sweeter still will be the welcome which awaits a man when his day of life is done and evening comes.

The man of faith is in the world but not of it. He takes the position to which God has called him and works out his salvation with fear and trembling. From morning till night, from one end of the year to the other, he is encompassed with bad example and deafened with false precepts. He hears men descant on the folly of fidelity to the exterior duties of religion — nay, of the folly of all religion whatsoever. He hears injustice and dishonesty lauded as smart business procedure. He hears men talk about the struggle for existence as doing away with fraternal charity. He hears drunkenness and profanity and impurity spoken of as if sin were merely a word of three letters and hell a dream. To offset the corroding influences of evil precepts and evil example, faith reminds him that God demands of man obedience to His laws and keeps before him the sanctions that attach to those laws. Faith, then, overcomes the world by supplying us with motives for Christian living, which far outweigh the motives with which the world tries to beguile us.

But our faith, to be efficacious, must not be a barren abstract conviction to revealed doctrines, but must be informed by the love of God. It is only a lively faith which will foster the spirit of obedience and of Christian virtue, and which will conquer the world.

Remember this, brethren, and stir up the faith that is in you. Remember that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered within the mind of man what things God has prepared for those that love him. Remember that lake of fire which Divine Justice has prepared for those who heed not the Divine calls to holiness or to penance. Remember that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. In all thy works remember this last end and thou wilt never sin.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

This Sunday used to be call Good Shepherd Sunday because, in the Mass, there is read the passage from St. John's Gospel in which Our Lord proclaims himself to be the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. The parable of the Good Shepherd was perhaps intended as a rebuke to the spiritual guides of the Jewish people. They, too, according to the Scriptures, were shepherds.

The people of God is often called the Lord's flock, the sheep of His hands, the sheep of His pasture, while the God of Israel is often spoken of as the Shepherd of Israel. These spiritual guides were under-shepherds of Him whose watchful tenderness for His people is set forth again and again by the prophets and in the Psalms. "He," says Isaias, "shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather together the lambs with His arm and shall take them into His bosom. He will keep Israel as a shepherd does his flock." But the under-shepherds fed themselves and not their flocks. The weak they did not strengthen, the sick they did not heal, that which was lost they did not seek, they ruled over the sheep with rigor and with a heavy hand. The sheep were scattered and wandered in every mountain and over the face of the earth, and there was none to seek them. God rebuked the shepherds of Israel by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "Thus said the Lord God. Behold, I myself will seek my sheep and will visit them; I will feed them; I will seek that which was lost; and that which was driven away. I will bring back again, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak, and I will feed them in judgment. I shall save my flock and it shall be no more a spoil; and I will set

up an shepherd over them and he shall feed them, even my servant David, and he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd." Our Lord, by adopting this name of Shepherd, declared Himself to be the Messiah. He did in His own person what the prophet had foretold concerning Him and so made good His claim.

The story of the circumstances under which the parable of the good shepherd was spoken is interesting enough. Our Lord's attention was called to a poor beggar who had been blind from his birth. The disciples wanted to know whether the man's own sins were responsible for his blindness or the sins of his parents. Our Lord answered that neither the man nor his parents had sinned. He spat on the earth, made clay of the spittle and having anointed the eyes of the blind man bade him go wash them in the pool of Siloe. The man did as he was told and came back cured. The neighbors could not understand what had happened. They asked him how he had been healed and he told them. Then they took him to the Pharisees and to them he told the same story. They could not believe that Jesus was of God because He had healed the blind man on the Sabbath day. Then they went to the blind man's parents to see if he really had been blind all his life. These said that he had been blind

and that now he could see, but dared not say further because they feared the Jews. Then the Pharisees went back to the blind man to question him again. The blind man told them that unless Jesus was of God He could not have done a thing the like of which had not happened from the beginning of the world. Therefore they cast him out of the synagogue,— excommunicated him. But he, seeking Jesus, adored Him and believed in Him as the Son of God. And then Jesus comforted the poor beggar whom He had healed. He contrasted His own ways with those of the Pharisees who cared for themselves but had no solicitude for the flock committed to their charge.

"I am the Good Shepherd," says Our Lord. And the words meant a great deal to those who listened to Him. The fidelity of the Eastern shepherd to his flock is proverbial. He guides his sheep by day and guards them by night. Wild beasts abound and robbers abound. Against all these he is ever vigilant. He cannot leave his charge, no matter what the season or the weather, and has no thought for himself but only for his trust. The sheep are his only companions, and they know him so well that he seldom finds it necessary to call them. They follow him of their own accord, but the voice of the stranger they know not, and stran-

gers they will not follow. What the Eastern shepherd is to his flock, that the Son of God is to the children of man. He knows every member of His flock, and watches over each with special solicitude. He saves them by His grace here, and conducts them to heaven hereafter, and He has submitted Himself to death in order to secure for them eternal life.

Now, on Ascension Day, Our Lord entered into His glory, and men shall see His face and hear His voice no more till the last day. But He made provision for mankind by instituting His church. It is to the Church that He left His own authority to rule us; it is into the hands of the Church that He has intrusted all the truths He taught; it is the Church that He has made the dispenser of all those means of salvation which He destined for the world.

One day, some time before His Passion, Jesus was in the country of Cæserea Philippi. His Apostles were with Him, and He began to question them about what the world at large, and they in particular, thought about Him. Simon, speaking in the name of his brethren, answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Our Lord was pleased with this confession of faith. He immediately told Simon that from that day forward his name would not be Simon but Peter.

Thou art Peter (which means a rock) and upon this Rock I will build My Church. The Church will be built some day and Peter will be the foundation, *and the gates of Hell (the powers of Hell) shall not prevail against it.* And Our God continues, I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Now the "keys" signify supreme power — and the Kingdom of Heaven is the Church of God — so that the promise of Our Lord amounts to this. I will make thee as a king to rule over my Church of which thou art to be the foundation.

Now when was this promise made good? After the Resurrection Jesus met His Apostles on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. And after providing them with food He addressed Himself to Peter: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee." Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." Again Our Lord asks the same question, receives the same assurance and gives Peter the same charge. A third time Jesus asks the question, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?"

This was too much for Peter. He remembered his three denials of his Master in the house of the High Priest the night Jesus was taken prisoner, and his reply breathes humility rather than assurance. "Lord," said Peter, "Thou knowest all things.

Thou knowest that I love Thee." And then his Master said, "Feed my sheep." Here then we have Simon Peter made shepherd of the whole flock of Christ, by Him who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

The Church is to be a mighty building. Peter is the foundation stone. It is a kingdom, Peter holds the Scepter. It is a fold and Peter is the shepherd.

By the mercy of God, brethren, we are members of the Fold of Christ. Let our hearts go forth to-day in loyalty to him who is Peter's successor, our Holy Father the Pope. Let us pray for the Sovereign Pontiff that the Lord will preserve him, and give him length of days and comfort and console him and deliver him out of the hands of his enemies. Let us listen to his words with somewhat of the reverence with which the Apostles heard the voice of their Master; submit our minds to his infallible decisions; follow out the advice he gives us, and obey his commands as the commands of God Himself. For he is the inheritor of the power and authority bestowed upon Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee by the Risen Lord. Let us beware of the spirit of the world which, in these days, would reverse the divinely established order of things and which would have the shepherds obey and be taught by the sheep instead of having the

sheep obey and be taught by the shepherds. Better, far better, it was for us, poor erring mortals that we are, to lie down in the fruitful pastures whither the Lord leads us, to walk in the paths which He points out to us, than to wander on the mountains, the prey of the beasts of the field and of the spoiler, as is the sad lot of so many of our fellow-men to-day. And above all things, brethren, let us do all we can by prayer and good example to hasten the day prophesied by our Lord when all men shall hear His voice and there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

The Lesson for to-day is particularly rich in practical suggestion. Having set forth the gracious mercy of God and His many gifts the Prince of the Apostles exhorts us not to be heedless of these benefits. First of all He appeals to the faithful in general, and then to servants. These he exhorts to reverence and fidelity to their superiors, whether said superiors be good and gentle or, as it sometimes happens, rough and unkind. The faithful in general he exhorts to remember that they are pilgrims not having here a lasting habitation — to abstain from all wickedness — to avoid, in their

intercourse with the Gentiles, all that might tend to the discredit of the faith — and to lead such lives before the world that all who see their works may be edified and give glory to God.

St. Peter's first point is full of meaning for such of us as are getting oblivious of our high destiny as sons of God and heirs of Heaven.

The first duty of a Christian is to realize that he is a pilgrim. Now, a pilgrim always has eyes fixed on his destination. He does not build houses and palaces in the lands through which he passes, nor does he heap up treasures and hire servants as if he intends to abide there. He rests at the inn and when he is refreshed goes on his way, leaving his room to others. He provides only the things necessary for his journey, and follows the straightest way home. He is ever thinking and longing for home, his parents, children and friends. Now, in the same way, the Christian ought to fix his heart upon those heavenly mansions which are the everlasting portion of the sons of God. He ought to lift his eyes to the city of God, which is his home. He ought not to set his heart upon anything that will hold him back from his destination. He ought, from time to time, to think of Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father and so encourage himself to endure the fatigues of his pilgrimage. He ought

to be of the same mind as the children of Israel, who, sitting by the rivers of Babylon, yearned for Sion. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I forget thee; if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy." "We have not here a lasting habitation, but we seek one that is to come," says the writer in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

In the second place St. Peter warns us against "carnal desires." As a pilgrim does not gorge himself with meat and drink, so we Christians must refrain from all the lusts of the flesh. What these lusts are we learn from St. Paul, and he gives a terrible catalogue of them in his Epistle to the Galatians. The works of the flesh which we must avoid are of various kinds, among which sins against holy purity enjoy evil preëminence. Then follow sins akin to idolatry, sins against justice and charity, sins of intemperance, strife and the many sins that flow from strife, concerning which the Apostle says that all who do them will have no place in the Kingdom of God. Some of these sins we should never dream of committing, but we are apt to forget that we can offend God as grievously, by thoughts that never find expression in word or deed, as if we did the things with which such thoughts are concerned. The Council of Trent even says that

"sometimes sinful thoughts wound the soul more grievously and are more dangerous than those which are done in the open day." They are more easily committed; they are usually considered of minor importance and especially at the hour of death they expose the soul to the peril of eternal damnation.

Let us fix firmly in our minds the principal points of Catholic doctrine touching this matter of evil desires, and these points are of application whether it be question of revenge, hatred, drunkenness, injustice or impurity. Of course, we must, at the start, note the difference between mere temptation and downright sin. Sometimes we discover thoughts in our minds of whose character we were not immediately aware. Conscience wakes up and warns us, and then we see what sort of guests are trying to gain entrance to our hearts. If we listen to the warning and try to act accordingly there is no harm done. There is question in such a case of temptation not of sin. But if, on the other hand, realizing that the thought is sinful, we deliberately harbor it even for a brief space of time we have sinned before God. We have embraced evil with our wills. And if together with willful complacency in the ideas which our imagination presents to us we have the will to give practical expression to such wickedness, then we are guilty of what

is called sinful desire. Now, brethren, every desire, though it be inefficacious, relating to an evil act or an evil thing, is a sin. "Thou shalt not covet," says the Law of God. And that sin takes on all the malice of the act which is the object of desire. If the act be one of grievous injustice the desire takes on the same moral quality. To desire to commit sacrilege is to be guilty of sacrilege in the heart. To desire to commit fornication is to incur the malice of fornication, and if the person who is the object of desire be a near relative or consecrated to God, the desire will take on the additional malice of incest or sacrilege. Our Blessed Lord warns us against the wickedness of evil desires in the Sermon on the Mount. "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Beware then of evil thoughts; keep your hearts pure before God. Only the clean of heart shall stand in his holy place. Only the clean of heart shall see the Vision Beautiful. Repeat, when tempted, the prayer of St. Cecilia: "Keep, O Lord, my heart and my body pure." Call to mind the prayer of the Wise Man for grace to avoid interior sins: "Set scourges over my thoughts and the dis-

cipline of wisdom over my heart. Let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me, and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind."

One more point remains to be considered, and that is the duty of avoiding evil and doing good in the interests of holy religion. We are, in this matter, to be mindful, in the first place, of those who are of the household of the faith, and, in the second place, of the enemies of the faith. We live among people who are forever seeking excuses for unbelief, and the strongest pretext we can give them for their persistence in enmity is our own lack of fidelity to the beliefs we profess. Each of us has the honor of the Church in his own keeping. We ought so to live that no man can honestly find anything of evil to say about us. Unfortunately, not all of us live in this way. Our strifes and contentions, our drunkenness, our blasphemies and indecencies, our neglect of Mass and the Sacraments, are all seized upon by outsiders as occasions for denouncing the Church, whose unworthy children we are. There is no use in appealing to solid reason and in pointing out that bad Catholics are bad not because of their Church, but in spite of their Church. People will still contend that the tree which bears such fruit must itself be bad.

Let us strive hereafter to lead an edifying and

praiseworthy life before the unconverted, so that, instead of reproaching us as they do at present, they may, seeing our good works, give glory to God on the day when in His mercy He will be pleased to visit them and give them the grace of faith.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Perhaps the principal point in to-day's Lesson is contained in the Apostle's exhortation to receive the Word of God first planted in our souls when we were adopted into the Church of God and regenerated and planted anew, as it were, whenever we hear that Word preached by those who are charged to preach it. This is a matter about which we all need admonition from time to time. Some of us hear the word of God, through which alone we have salvation, with impatience or indifference. We cannot endure sound doctrine. We are like the asp — spoken of by the Psalmist — that stoppeth her ears; that will not hear the voice of the charmers, nor of the wizard that charmeth wisely. We are like the Israelites who, weary of their journey and labor, spoke against God and Moses in Edom and said: "Our soul now loatheth this very light food" — this manna of the wilderness. We have little in common with the multitudes who, as St. Luke tells

us, pressed around Jesus on the borders of Genesareth to hear from Him the words of eternal life.

"The word of the Lord, which He hath spoken, is good," said Ezechias, the King, to Isaias, the prophet. The word of God is compared by Jesus Christ to seed which, good of itself, and capable of bringing forth fruit a hundred fold, is often sowed in vain because it does not fall upon good soil. The purpose of the parable of the sower is to describe for us the fate, so to speak, of the Divine seed of the Word of God — the conditions under which it fails to produce in the souls of men the results which of its own nature it is designed to produce.

The Word of God is good — good as the sunshine — good as our daily bread. But to benefit of it we must receive it, and we must be doers of it, not hearers only. A soul deprived of it soon becomes of the earth earthly. A people deprived of it soon forgets God and falls a prey to all sorts of wickedness. The Word of God is warning, encouragement, enlightenment. As the chosen people were guided in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire by night, so are we to be guided by the Word of God in our journey through time to eternity.

Christ charged all His Apostles to preach the Gospel, and St. Paul, filled with the Spirit of God,

charged Timothy before Him, who shall judge the living and the dead, to preach the Word in season and out of season. To the ministers of the Gospel from the first have been applied the words of the prophet. "Cry and cease not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins." The ministry of the Word ranks in sacredness with the ministry of the Sacraments. "Woe is unto me," says St. Paul, "if I preach not the Gospel." Woe is unto us priests of the Church if we do not break to the sheep of the flock the bread of life.

Woe unto us priests if we do not reprove, instruct, entreat you in all charity and doctrine. We have only one hour, or less, out of the whole week, in which to speak to you of the one thing necessary, to strengthen you against temptation, to warn you against dangers, to stir you to repentance for your transgressions, to open those doors at which Christ has knocked in vain for years — the doors of your hearts. You remember the little touch in the parable of the Sower and the seed about the birds of the air that picked up the seed that fell by the wayside. The preachers of God's word see that going on for six days out of seven and shall they not do what they can to repair the loss? They see the enemy of man's salvation sowing evil seed with the good —

they see the evil weeds growing up and choking the wheat. Shall they not do what in them lies to secure a good harvest? Why make their grievous talk more grievous still by your indifference on ill-conceded impatience? Remember that if the priest is bound to preach, the people are bound to listen. Your duty, brethren, with regard to the word of God, can be outlined in two short sentences. You must listen to it willingly. You must do as it dictates.

Listen to it willingly. The preacher brings you a message from your Father and your home. Never mind the preacher himself. He may be rough, uncouth, lacking in the persuasive words of human wisdom. His accent, presence, grammar and delivery may leave much to be desired. But the message is the thing. When the postman brings you a letter from some distant friend, do you refuse to accept it because he is lacking in distinction of manners or because the envelope is not of the latest fashionable tint? There never was a sermon or an instruction preached yet from which the reasonable mind could not draw some edification. Some people listen to sermons for æsthetic reasons. They like to have their fancy tickled by bursts of eloquence — by the charms of perfect diction, flowers of speech and well studied gestures. For the truth,

which the preacher is trying to bring home to them and which is the inspiration of his effort, they care nothing. Sermons are preached not to amuse people but to help them to save their souls. Upon such listeners as those we have been speaking of, the fiery zeal of St. Paul, who was no orator but only a plain, blunt man, would be wasted, while their ears would be shocked by the honest but provincial accent of the Prince of the Apostles. Reverence the Word of God, no matter who preaches it. Eat of the bread of life whether it be presented to you on a golden salver or a rough wooden platter. Consider the King's message, not the King's ambassador. Be not of that almost reprobate generation who, heedless of the duty of acquainting themselves with the rules of Christian conduct, will never listen to instruction which they can possibly escape from. Be not of that other generation which listens, indeed, but only to find fault with the preacher if he dares to touch upon matters in which they are interested — to find reasons for praising themselves — and pretext for pharisaical criticism of their neighbors.

To hear the Word of God diligently and with the proper spirit is the first of our duties. The second is to make it a rule of life. "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves," said the Apostle, who goes on to tell us that a man

that contents himself with merely listening to the Gospel, without reducing its precepts to practice, is like to a man who looks at himself in a glass and then turns away without troubling himself to wipe off the blemishes which the mirror disclosed to him. Such a one might just as well have never looked into the mirror at all for all the good it does him. The Word of God represents to us what we are and what we ought to be. How many of us neglect the repentance and amendment which the hearing of it suggests?

Reverence the word of God, brethren, and cultivate a relish for it. Take care lest you be of any one of those classes of hearers of it who are rebuked by Jesus Christ, is the parable of the sower — who hear it altogether in vain. Receive it with a good and very good heart, love it, use it habitually and preservingly and you will bring forth fruit "in patience."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Last Sunday the Church exhorted us by the mouth of the Apostle of good works to hear the Word of God, which is able to save our souls. To-day she exhorts us to be doers of that word, not mere hearers, deceiving ourselves. To emphasize this vital

point, St. James uses an illustration which all can understand. He compares the Word of God to a looking-glass which makes known to us the sins and imperfections that defile our souls. Every care to hear and to see will not suffice unless we act accordingly — unless we try to remove the stains and blemishes which, through the clear medium of God's word, we discover in ourselves. After laying down his general admonition, the Apostle goes on to point out one special provision of the Law of God, in the light of which every one of us, perhaps, will see defects that call for correction. "Keep thy tongue from evil," says the Psalmist. "Make doors and bars to thy mouth; take heed, lest thou slip with thy tongue," says the son of Sirach. "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have perished by their own tongue. Set a watch, O God, before my mouth," says David, "and a door round about my lips, that my heart may not incline to evil words and make excuses to sin." There is, perhaps, no rule of the Christian life upon which Holy Scripture insists so often and so emphatically as the rule relating to the right use of the tongue Certainly there is no rule which is so frequently disregarded. "Who is there that hath not offended with his tongue?" says St. James.

"He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul; but he that hath no guard over his speech shall meet with evil." We begin to realize what this means when we call to mind the long list of sins of the tongue. From it proceed blasphemies, calumnies, backbiting, obscenities, perjuries and tale-bearing, which is the sowing of discord among brethren. No wonder, then, that St. James declares that "if any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, such a man's religion is vain." He is disregarding God's law on a part of prime importance. The evil talker proves that he does not truly worship God, in whose presence he fears not to detract, lie, swear, provoke others to anger, dishonoring thereby God and religion. His service of God, whether internal, by acts of adoration and reverence, or external by participation in the sacraments and in sacrifice, is of no avail because he fails in justice and charity, which defect frustrates all his hopes and exertions.

The sins of the tongue which are most common are those of detraction — unjust, uncharitable talk about one's neighbors. God's will in this matter has been revealed with a vigor and rigor that is well nigh appalling. "The detractor," says the Book of Proverbs, "is the abomination of men," and the

son of Sirach tells us that he that backbiteth secretly is nothing better than a serpent which stingeth in silence.

Backbiting is the injury we do our neighbor by unjustly revealing his secret shortcomings. It is a sin against justice and consequently a sin against charity also. Every one of our brethren has a right to his good name before his neighbors till he has committed some sin which the public welfare requires us to reveal. The sins he commits in secret are matters which lie between himself and God. When we presume to make them known without proper justification we incur the guilt of detraction. We can be guilty of this sin in several ways, namely, by making known faults which are hidden; by insinuating that there are faults which we could make known if we chose to do so; by putting an unfavorable construction upon the good actions of our neighbor; by questioning his good qualities and seeking to diminish his merits; by damning him with faint praise; by keeping silence when such silence is tantamount to an approval of the evil which others are retailing. Remember, brethren, that we are speaking here of detraction in the sense of backbiting rather than of calumny pure and simple.

Some people affect to think that, so long as they

tell the truth only, there is no sin in discourse against a neighbor.

Now the law forbidding lies holds for every moment. One must never utter an untruth, but one is not bound to be telling the truth at all times. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Furthermore, it is a fact that sometimes more harm can be done by the manifestation of things that are true than by the imputation of crimes that are false. To say, then, that we only told the truth by no means excuses us from the guilt of detraction.

In deciding upon the malice of a given sin of detraction certain matters have to be considered, namely: The standing of the detractor, the standing of the person who is spoken against and the nature of the statements made. Under ordinary circumstances backbiting indulged in by persons known to be persistent tattlers, may reasonably be presumed to count for little. Under ordinary circumstances, too, the revelation of a grave misdeed entails the guilt of a grave sin. Again, great harm may be done if a man or woman of habitual gravity and prudence, lets out something about a neighbor's faults which, if uttered by an habitual gossip, would be lightly considered. Again we have to take into account the standing of the injured person. If he be a priest, for example — a man whom people

naturally respect and whose power for good among them will be impaired by the unjustifiable revelation of his defects, the detractor will have much to answer for.

Detraction, like every other sin of injustice, calls for reparation. And there is the difficulty. If we have, by telling the truth about anyone, caused his neighbors to think less of him before, we cannot take back one word. To do so would be to lie, and a lie is ever a sin, even when told for a good purpose. The only thing we can do is to put in a good word, whenever occasion offers, for those we have wronged, and in this indirect way endeavor to atone for our sin.

Of the whole tribe of detractors, there is none to whom the words of St. James apply so pointedly as to the so-called "pious" persons who, proud of their own righteousness, affect to treat their erring neighbors as the Pharisee treated the Publican, unmindful of the important fact that fidelity to religious practices, unless accompanied by charity, avails nothing. Their tongues are like sharp arrows or the edge of a sword, or like the lash of a whip that maketh a blue mark. Of such it is written that God shall scorn the scorner, and in His time the measure they meted out to others shall be meted out to them. Their religion is vain.

Brethren, in speaking of your neighbor remember that we are to do unto others as we should like others to do unto us. Put yourself in his place and see whether you would enjoy his speaking of you as you are disposed to speak of him. If you really want to talk about somebody's defects talk about your own, and nearly every one of us can supply plenty of interesting matter for conversation at our own expense. The rule we ought to follow in talking about our neighbor is very simple. Be as kind to his virtues as we expect him to be to our virtues; be as blind to his faults as we expect him to be to our faults. By following such a course we shall please God and we shall have our reward even in this life, in the shape of the love and honor of many friends.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

"The time makes haste to come, the Lord will judge His people," says Moses in the Canticle which He spoke in the ears of the Israelites just before God called him. This is the great fact upon which, as well as upon the necessity of preparing for it, the Prince of the Apostles dwells in to-day's Lesson.

The day of the Lord draws nigh — the final end

of all is fast approaching. Wherefore, let each one busy himself in preparing for it, observing that prudence of salvation which is true wisdom before God. "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." Be sober and vigilant in prayer. But the great preparation for the coming judgment is, according to St. Peter, the unceasing practice of charity. "Before all things have a constant and mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covers a multitude of sins." Let us consider these familiar words. You will notice that the Apostle lays particular emphasis on the duty of charity. Without it, neither prayers nor vigils, nor fastings, nor other works of penance, will avail to salvation. "Charity, and charity alone," says St. Augustine, "extinguishes our sins."

Charity is the greatest of the three virtues that have God Himself for their object. It is, therefore, called the "queen of the virtues." It is a gift of God bestowed upon us in baptism, whereby we are enabled to love God for His own sake above all created things, and our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake. Our Lord promulgates the precept of the love of God in these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind."

This is the greatest and first commandment. We ought to love God because He is infinitely good and perfect; because He has loved us with an everlasting love; because He has delivered up for our salvation His only Son; because He fills our days with blessings, and lastly, because He has commanded us to love Him. And Jesus Christ has given us a test whereby we can see for ourselves whether we abide in charity or not. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

The love of our neighbor is inseparable from the love of God. St. John says in his first Epistle, "This commandment we have from God that he who loveth God love also his brother." We must love our neighbor because, in the first place, we are all children of the one Heavenly Father, because we are brethren in Jesus Christ, because our Master has taught us to do so by His word and example and because God commands it. "He that loveth not," says St. John, "abideth in death." And this love for our neighbor imposes certain duties upon us with regard to him. "Charity is patient," says St. Paul. "Charity is kind." "Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely — seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." And these

offices of charity which, as the Catechism of Trent says, are illustrious of themselves, become yet more illustrious when they are rendered to an enemy. The supreme exercise of brotherly charity, as the same venerable authority assures us, is the forgiveness of injuries. Charity is an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. Charity makes genuine brotherhood. It may not be able to dissipate sorrow and suffering, but at any rate it helps men to bear these burdens by letting them see that their neighbors are willing, if they could, to share such burdens.

St. Peter uses an expression concerning fraternal charity which has become almost proverbial. He says that charity covers a multitude of sins. The expression, however, is not often clearly understood. Does the Apostle speak of the effect of charity upon our neighbor, or does he mean that charity covers the sins of those who practice it? It seems that he has both these thoughts in mind. There is a passage in the Epistle of St. James which declares that he who causes the sinner to be converted from the error of his way *shall cover a multitude of sins,* and there is another passage in the Book of Proverbs which declares that *charity covereth all sins.* Now, this is probably what St. Peter had in mind. There are many ways in which charity can

be said to cover — i. e., to make to disappear — a neighbor's sins. As anger and strife beget anger and strife and so bring out our neighbor's defects, so, on the other hand, love and forbearance overlook his faults and cover them from public view. Again, charity forgives by inclining men to act kindly toward those who hate and injure us, disposes them to a better mind. Charity thinketh no evil, interprets a neighbor's acts favorably when such interpretation is possible, conceals what it cannot ignore, spreads abroad no evil rumors, and blots out, or at least hides from the gaze of the world, a multitude of suspicions and sins of every kind. It is clear, then, that charity covereth the sins of one's neighbor. But how does it "cover" the sins of the charitable? Now, the word "covered," when used of sins in the Scriptures, means simply "forgiven." "Thou hast pardoned the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sins," says the Psalmist. There is a passage in the prophecy of Ezechiel in which God threatens that the crimes of Jerusalem shall be like blood upon a rock — blood which cannot be absorbed by the earth and so be "covered." St. Peter then means that our charity will make our sins to disappear — or be "covered." But how can this be? There is only one way in getting rid of our sins and that is

by repentance and the resolve to amend our lives. At the same time we must not forget that charity brings, as the wind brings rain, those graces and dispositions which effect that turning of the heart to God which we call contrition. "A merciful man doth good to his own soul," says the Scriptures. When our hearts soften to sorrow or poverty, God is very near us. That feeling is the beginning of the love of God, and the mercy we show to others is a preparation for the entrance of the Holy Spirit into our own hearts. It "enlarges" our hearts according to the word of the Psalmist. The mercy we show to our brethren will bring upon us the crowning mercy of repentance. Blessed are the merciful, says Jesus Christ, for they shall obtain mercy. Such, then, is the meaning of St. Peter. He does not mean that merely charitable actions will, of themselves, be accepted by God as canceling our sins. Only repentance will cancel them. Fraternal charity, kindness to others — makes our latent love of God to glow and in this way — indirectly — awakens in us the great truths of eternity.

Brethren, the frequency with which the Church invites us to meditate on the "queen of the virtues" ought to impress upon us the importance of practicing it. Let us learn to love God wholly and

completely. Let us, for His sake, do what we can for the hungry and homeless and the afflicted, encouraged by the thought that when the end comes, Jesus Christ will reward us for those acts even as if we had done them for Himself, for so it is written.

TRINITY SUNDAY

After honoring God the Father, who so loved the world that He delivered up for us men and for our salvation His only begotten Son, after honoring God the Son, who in obedience to the Father's will emptied Himself of His glory, and becoming, like to us in all things, sins alone excepted, submitted to death, even the death of the cross, that we might have everlasting life, and after honoring God the Holy Ghost, whose manifestation we commemorated last Sunday, we are called upon to-day to pay our tribute of praise and adoration to the Blessed Trinity.

The doctrine of one God in three Divine Persons is the foundation of the faith. Take it away and there is no Incarnation of the Word, no satisfaction for the sins of men, no Redemption, no virtue or efficacy in the Sacraments, no infallibility in the Church. In one word, the whole of Christianity

centers in this most ancient and most awful mystery. We know it only by revelation. Men can come, by the study of His creatures, to know the Invisible Creator who is blessed forever. We can get some idea of His wisdom and might and goodness and beauty. The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of His hands. But, what God is in Himself — what is the inner life of Him who reigneth eternal, He alone can tell us. The Church, resting upon the inspired testimonies set forth in both the Old and the New Testaments, has formulated what her children must believe concerning the Trinity in the most explicit terms. And as we read the articles of the Athanasian Creed wherein her teaching on the subject is summed up, we begin to see how appropriate to the feast of this day is the Lesson from St. Paul to which you have just listened. "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments and how unsearchable are His ways! For who hath known the mind of Him? Or who hath been His counselor?" And right here it is well to call to mind the story of what happened to the great St. Augustine, when he was preparing a sermon on the Trinity. It seemed to him that he was walking by the sea, contemplating its depth and

vastness. Presently he met a little boy, who was pouring water from a shell into a hole in the sand. The child, when asked what he was doing, answered that he was going to empty the ocean into the hole. "But how can that be?" asked the Saint. Said the child: "It is as easy for me to do this as it is for you to explain the mystery on which you are going to preach." St. Ambrose says that the doctrine of the Trinity passeth all understanding, and another great Saint and theologian tells us that to search into it too curiously is rashness, to believe it, is piety, to know it, is eternal life.

Taught by the Church we worship, one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance. The Three Persons have one and the same divine nature The Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet these are not three Gods, but only one God. The Father is made of no one, neither created nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. Each is uncreated, eternal, incomprehensible; each is equal in all perfections to the other. We must not imagine that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are but different titles given

to one Divine Person according to the different ways in which that one Person acts. The Catholic faith is that there are three Persons equal and distinct. To bring the doctrine home to the minds of the faithful, different comparisons have been used, but all of them limp. The human soul, with its three powers of will, memory and understanding, is the best image of the Trinity to be found in created nature. You all know the beautiful legend about the Shamrock — how St. Patrick used to illustrate, for our fathers long ago, when he came among them preaching the Gospel, this great fundamental dogma. Theologians try to explain the genesis, so to speak, of the Trinity by some such teaching as this. God, the highest intelligent Being in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, understands from the beginning His own Divine nature. The Divine nature understanding is called the Father. The product of that act by which God understands Himself is called the Son. God, moreover, loves the product of that act by which He understands. The Father loves the Son and the product of that act of love, which is mutual, is the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. But such explanations as this do not help us much. The Trinity is a mystery and we must be satisfied to wait till we see God face to face and

know as we are known, believing meanwhile upon the words of Jesus Christ which he spoke to the twelve when he bade them go forth and teach all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and upon other words of Christ not less explicit. And does not St. John tell us that "there are three who give testimony in heaven — the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost — and these three are one?"

Now this great mystery has its practical aspects for us Christians. In the name of the Trinity we are baptized. In the same name we are confirmed. In the same name our sins are forgiven. We begin all our prayers with the sign of the cross which is an explicit evidence of our faith in the Triune God. When we are dying the priest will once more commend us to the Trinity when he will say, "depart out of this world, O Christian Soul, in the name of the Almighty Father who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost who was forced out upon thee." And in commending us to the divine mercies, he will remind God that, though we have sinned, we at least never denied the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Let us then, brethren, when we make the sign of the cross, remember to make it with all reverence. Let us

strive to be of one mind the one toward the other, observing unity and love of brotherhood, for Christ prayed that His disciples might be one even as He and His Father are one. And let us, according to the spirit of the Church on this day's solemnity, offer up to the Trinity our humble tributes of praise and adoration. To God the Father, who made us, to God the Son who redeemed us, to God the Holy Ghost who is the minister to our souls of the fruits of redemption, to the Triune God who alone hath immortality and who dwelleth in light inaccessible, glory and honor and thanksgiving from eternity into eternity — Amen.

PENTECOST

To-day the Church commemorates the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. On the fiftieth day after His Resurrection and the tenth after His Ascension, Jesus Christ sent the promise of His Father upon those chosen ones whom He had commissioned to preach in His name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The mission of the Paraclete was to bring to their minds all things whatsoever He had said to them, to give them courage to preach penance and the remission of sins in His name in the face of a perverse generation, and to

bind them all together into a living Church which should continue the work He began unto the consummation of the world. So that this day, which witnessed the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, is also the birthday of the Church.

St. Luke has described this manifestation in the Acts of the Apostles. Their Master had warned them not to leave Jerusalem till they should be endowed with power from on high. After receiving His final blessing they went back to the city and persevered with one mind in prayer, waiting the coming of the Paraclete. With them were the disciples, less honored than the twelve, but who having been witnesses to the words and works of the Son of God, were to have a share in bringing men to the Gospel. With them, moreover, were certain holy women, and among them was Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The number of persons present were about one hundred and twenty. While they waited, an event of great importance came to pass. The fall of Judas had reduced the number of the Apostles to eleven. "Those whom thou gavest Me out of the world I have kept; and none of them is lost save one," said Our Lord in His Prayer after the Last Supper. He had not seen fit to fill up the vacancy during the days which He spent in the company of the Apostles after He arose from the

dead. St. Peter, after reciting the crimes of Judas, reminded his brethren of certain things written in the Book of Psalms and suggested that some one out of those men who followed Jesus from His Baptism till His Ascension be chosen to bear witness with the eleven to the truth of the Resurrection. Two candidates were appointed, and lots were cast with prayer to God that the Apostles might make the right choice. The lots fell upon Matthias who was thereupon numbered with the Apostles, taking the place of ministry and apostleship from which Judas had, by transgression, fallen.

At that season Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims who had assembled to keep the great feast commemorative of the giving of the commandments to their fathers on the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt. In the Acts of the Apostles is a list of some of the people who were represented in the Holy City. There were Jews from Rome, Jews from Arabia and Jews from all the countries lying between. It was about nine in the morning of the tenth day after the Ascension when the Paraclete descended. There was a sound as of a mighty wind coming from heaven. It filled the whole house where the Apostles and their associates were sitting. Tongues, as it were, of fire appeared and rested upon their heads. The Holy

Ghost took possession of them. They were filled with the sevenfold gifts mentioned by the prophet, with wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord. In addition to these gifts the Holy Ghost gave them to understand all languages and to be understood by all men. Since the confusion of tongues at Babel there have been as many languages as countries. By the gift of tongues God enabled these poor men, who knew no other languages than their own coarse mother tongue, to fulfill their charge of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

Meanwhile a great crowd had collected around the house and the same spirit which had moved the Apostles to declare the wonderful works of God, moved the multitudes to draw nigh and hear. The devout were amazed at what they saw and heard. But there were some who mocked and said that the Apostles were filled with wine. But Peter came forth and said:

Ye sons of Israel and all who dwell in Jerusalem, hearken to these my words: We are not overcome with wine as some have declared. It is too early in the day. That which was spoken of by the prophet Joel hath this day come to pass. In the latter days, saith the Lord, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daugh-

ters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. Indeed I, the Lord, will in those days pour out My Spirit upon My servants and My handmaids, and they shall prophesy.

And yet more, ye men of Israel. You did crucify and slay Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God, by miracles and signs and wonders which He did in the midst of you. This Jesus, God hath raised again to life, as David had foretold, when he said: Thou wilt not suffer, Thy holy One, to see corruption, of whose resurrection we are all witnesses. Being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath done all these things which you see and hear to-day. Wherefore let the house of Israel know most certainly that the Jesus whom you crucified was both Lord and Christ. With many other words did Peter testify and exhort the people, so that in that day three thousand were converted.

As on Christmas day we commemorate the manifestation of God the Son, so to-day do we commemorate the manifestation of God the Holy Ghost. The earth had not yet heard the name of the Holy Spirit, but there had never been a time when He was not at work, speaking to the hearts

of men, prompting them to do good and avoid evil.

It was through the operation of this Holy Spirit that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us; but his reign did not begin till that of Jesus Christ had ended.

Would you know, my dear brethren, the gift which God gave to His Church on this day of Pentecost. In reading the Holy Scriptures we cannot help noticing that though the Apostles were taught by Christ Himself, they did not fully understand what He told them. Even so late as the Ascension Day they had not understood His business on earth, for on the way out of the city to Mt. Olivet one of them asked Him how soon He would restore the glory of Israel. All that Jesus Christ had taught them lay in their minds like seed cast into the earth. Something was needed to make this knowledge spring up and bear fruit. That something was the Holy Spirit; hence Our Lord had said: "He will teach you all things and bring to your minds whatsoever I have delivered to you."

Furthermore, they needed courageous hearts. This was also given them by the Spirit of God. There were poured out upon them the seven gifts of which the prophet spoke, and among them the spirit of fortitude. They, who in the garden had

been terrified by the mere sight of the soldiers, now boldly faced the people; and Peter, who was afraid to speak the truth before a servant girl, now preaches Christ before the Great Council of the Sanhedrim. Listen to the words of St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans: "Who, then, shall separate us from the following of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or persecution, or danger, or the sword?" It was then to enable the Apostles fully to understand their mission, to enable them to teach the truths delivered to them, to enable them to carry the good tidings even to the ends of the earth, that the Holy Spirit was sent upon the chosen band who formed, on that day, the beginnings of the infant Church.

Again, my dear brethren, would you know the gift of God on this day. The Holy Spirit has renewed the face of the earth. In every clime, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same, the true God is worshiped. The Vicar of Christ who ruled over a few thousand on that day, is now obeyed by hundreds of millions. Nineteen centuries have rolled away since the Apostles passed to their reward, but the Church of to-day is the Church of Apostolic days. She preserves and teaches without shadow of change what she taught

on the first Pentecost. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is with her. Empires have risen and passed away leaving nothing behind but their ruins or their memory, but the Church of Christ is still in the morning of life. The same spirit which inflamed the hearts of the Apostles is at work to-day — witness those generous and devoted souls who are called to go forth and labor in distant and savage lands, counting it nothing, so that souls may be brought to Christ.

My dear brethren, the same Holy Spirit which was given to the Apostles in Pentecost was also given to us in confirmation — though, of course, in a less degree — to the end that we may know our duties as members of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and be enabled to fulfill them. Let us remember that our bodies are indeed the temples of the Holy Ghost, and if one shall violate the temple of God, him shall the Lord destroy. Remember, then, the presence of the Holy Ghost. Grieve not the spirit, cast not out the Spirit of God. Be faithful to His inspirations. Our hearts will be filled with the peace of God no matter what our surroundings may be, the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, and which no man shall take away from us.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The lesson which St. John teaches in to-day's Epistle is the obligation of brotherly love. It is a lesson which the Church endeavors by frequent repetition to impress upon us, but which many of us are slow to learn and which some of us, perhaps, never learn at all, despite the Apostle's assurance that he who loveth not his brother abideth in death.

Our Lord has told us in the Gospel of St. John that brotherly love is the sign by which all men shall know that we are His disciples. He loves the children of men. We must love our neighbor for Christ's sake and after Christ's example. We must show our fellow-men a due regard of that mercy and compassion by which His life among men was marked and which His preachers and His saints have proclaimed from generation to generation. The Kingdom of Heaven is the fellowship of brotherly love. This is the fire which He came to cast upon earth and which He earnestly desires to see kindled in every heart. "A new commandment I give unto you; that you love one another as I have loved you," said our Master at the Last Supper; and He assures us, moreover, that what-

soever good we do to each other, He looks upon it as done to Himself.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And by our neighbor is meant not only those who are near and dear to us by ties of blood and kindred, not only our own people and our fellow-citizens, not only those noble souls to whom our hearts go out unbidden, but our fellow-men of every condition, even our enemies. Every unit of the human race is the child of our Heavenly Father. Each had his place in the heart of our Saviour in Gethsemane and Calvary. Each one shares in the solicitude of the Holy Spirit of God. This is God's view of mankind, and this must be our view, if we hope to share in the joys He has in store for those who keep His commandments. It may be that there are in our neighbor certain ways or qualities which, naturally speaking, excite in us feelings of dislike or disgust. We must, nevertheless, conform our mind and heart to the mind and heart of God. If we love Him we must promote His work. If He has made men for Himself then we must do all that we can to second Him. Only he who loves his neighbor is the worthy child of the Father who is in heaven, who maketh the sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon both the just

and the unjust. If we love only those who love us we are no better than the heathen and the publican.

Now, the charity we are to show our neighbor must not be confined to kindly words, though kindly words and kindly thoughts are good as far as they go. There is no charity in good wishes for the relief of a brother or sister who wants daily food if, being able to minister to such, we refuse to do so. Wherefore, St. John says: "My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Acts of beneficence are the real test of true feelings of brotherly compassion. The loving kindness of Christ, Who went about doing good, Who brought life and healing and mercy to all, whether saints or sinners, Jew or Canaanite, friends or enemies, is the pattern which we, according to our vocation, are bound to imitate.

The sign of greatest love for our brethren is the one given by Christ Himself Who laid down His life for us. "This is My commandment," says the Master, "that you love one another as I have loved you." To risk one's own life for the sake of the spiritual life or bodily relief of one's neighbor, is the perfection of charity.

The following principles regarding what is called the order of charity ought to be kept in mind.

First of all we must love God. That is the greatest and first commandment. After God we must love ourselves. Charity, well regulated, begins at home. This is clear from the promptings of our nature which grace perfects, and from the words of Christ who bids us love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Wherefore we must never sin in the interests of a neighbor's salvation, nor may we expose ourselves for his sake to the real proximate danger of sin. The poet tells us that we should love ourselves last. This is right enough when there is no question of salvation. But what can it profit a man if, through zeal for the salvation of others, he suffer the loss of his own soul?

After the love we ought to have for God and ourselves comes the love we ought to have for our neighbor's soul. The doctrine on this point is very simple. When our neighbor is in extreme spiritual necessity; that is when he cannot be saved without our help, we must give that help even at the peril of our lives. "The good Christian," says St. Augustine, "will not hesitate to sacrifice his temporal life for the salvation of his brethren, seeing that Jesus Christ has left him an example by dying for all of us." The words of St. John, then, in today's Epistle are no figure of speech. We are bound to lay down our lives for our brethren if

that sacrifice be necessary to secure for them life eternal. If a dying man who is steeped in sin and who is incapable of an act of perfect contrition, begs us to go for a priest, and there is no one else to do him that service, we must not fail him. If an infant near to death cannot be baptized, except at the risk of your life, you must minister to its extreme spiritual need at any cost.

After discussing the sign of greatest love the Apostle goes on to exhort us to share our goods with those who suffer from bodily want, and asks us how the charity of God can be in us, if we heed not a brother's distress. Many are the pretenses employed by men to excuse themselves from the fulfillment of the obligations of charity. Let us not deceive ourselves. Remember the admonition of Holy Scripture: "Give alms out of thy substance and turn not away thy face from any poor person. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou hast much give abundantly; if thou hast little give of that little willingly." Remember the divine promise. He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to his Lord, who will repay him, and remember also the assurance of Jesus Christ that what we do for even the least of our brethren He looks upon as done for Himself and will reward us in the great

day of rewards. Never look for thanks. The poor are seldom grateful.

To conclude, then, brethren, let me recall to your minds the following points: If we are to love our neighbor as Christ loved us, we must make no distinction of persons; we must not consider our neighbor's merits, whether he be agreeable or disagreeable, whether he be friend or enemy, whether he will appreciate our kindness or otherwise. Favorable circumstances ought not to be the motives of brotherly love, nor ought those that are unfavorable to be a hindrance to it. True charity is founded in God, and the relation all men have to God obliges us to live them all for God's sake — not merely in word, but in deed and in truth. Thus and thus only shall we fulfill the commandment of our Divine Master.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

There is food for profitable reflection in every sentence of the Lesson for this day. Starting out with an exhortation to humility, the Prince of the Apostles bids us cast our care upon the Lord, Who will sustain us. He commands us to take heed to ourselves lest, perhaps, overcome by drunkenness

or drowsiness, we fall a prey to our wily and dangerous enemy. He bids us resist that enemy, solid and fixed in the faith. For faith, by the hopes and the fears which it holds out to us, nerves us to fight bravely the good fight. God, Who has in His mercy called us out of nothing to a participation in His glory, will, as another proof of His grace, perfect the work He has begun in us.

Of these points let us consider only two. The first is St. Peter's admonition about casting aside all undue anxiety touching the concerns of life and placing all our undertakings in the hands of God. The second is the command that we be strong in faith.

The words of the Apostle concerning solicitude are but an echo of Our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. At the start, someone may point out that certain passages of Holy Scripture seem to forbid solicitude with regard to temporal matters while others seem to command it. It is easy to reconcile the apparent contradiction if we reflect for a moment. Prudent foresight is surely not condemned. God has given to each of us a vocation, in the fulfillment of which we must be diligent if we wish to avoid the fate of unprofitable servants. We must labor, doing that work which is appointed, that we may have something for our-

selves when the rainy day comes, and that we may, as Scripture says, have wherewith to give to them that suffer need. Labor is the appointed lot of man since the Fall, and sloth is a sin. St. Paul tells the Ephesians that he toiled by night and by day lest he should be a burden to them, and he says that if any man will not work, the same walks disorderly and deserves not to eat. A certain amount of solicitude attaches to our respective vocations. But it is one thing to exercise well-ordered care, regarding this as a part of God's providence, and quite another thing to let ourselves be devoured by inordinate anxiety. The first is commended and commanded. The second is forbidden, for the reason that it is a sort of infidelity. It is a practical denial of the fact that there is One Who watches over us with a father's love and Who will provide for us whom He has made according to His own image and likeness — whom He has called to the inheritance of souls — with certainly not less loving kindness than he manifests towards the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Our Lord has made use of no less than seven arguments to show us how unworthy of a Christian is undue anxiety about the concerns of life. "Cast thy care upon the Lord and He will sustain thee," says the Psalmist. Most probably St. Peter had this verse

in his mind when he wrote the passage whose import we are considering. Commend to God the burden He has laid upon you, casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you. Put not your confidence in your own strength or industry, but rather in the divine goodness. Trust rather to God, Who will provide for you, will bless the labors of your hands, and will make all your works prosper. And He will not only minister to you, but will defend you against your enemies. Eternal sorrow is the lot of the unjust, not of the servants of God. "Expect the Lord; do manfully; let thy heart take courage and wait thou for the Lord."

The second point we shall consider is St. Peter's exhortation to us to be strong in the faith. We are soldiers of Christ. And in the spiritual armor which St. Paul wishes us to put on, faith is designated on the shield whereby we can resist all the fiery darts of our most wicked enemy. Faith strengthens us by bringing before our eyes the power and the truth of God. St. John says, "This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." And if it overcame the world, then it is able to overcome the prince of this world, the enemy of our salvation. We ascribe to faith the victory whereby we conquer the devil and all his temptations, because faith shows to us the good things

that are to come, and animates us to secure them; it moreover shows us whence those aids are to be secured by which we shall be able to fight the good fight. By faith the Apostle means not a barren, inoperative faith, as is clear from his references to sobriety, watchfulness and firmness. Our faith must be practical. Eternal life is the reward of those only who accept God's law and practice it — of faith accompanied by charity. Under faith is included that hearty confidence in God which the consideration of the truths of faith is calculated to inspire and which will hearten us against our enemies. "If God be with us whom shall we fear." What faith did for the saints of old, as set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews, was written for our edification, that, imitating their firmness we may, like them, become worthy to receive the promise of eternal life.

There is another sense in which, brethren, I would exhort you to be strong in the faith. The world around us makes little of that precious gift which gives a meaning to life and an illumination to death. The world is concerned only with the substance of this world and gives no thought to the evidence of things that appear not. Like the Romans of old, whom St. Paul rebukes in his greatest Epistle, people busy themselves with creatures,

ignoring the Creator, who is blessed forever. There is no life for man beyond the short span of years which he passes here. There is no immortality but the fleeting remembrance of men. There is no beauty save that which perishes. The air we breathe is full of these and kindred notions. We must be on our guard lest they find place in our souls. Let us beware of everybody and of everything that tends to rob us of our most precious possession. Let us confide in Him with whom are the words of eternal life rather than in the wisdom of men. Let us remember that, no matter how often or how grievously we may sin, it is possible for us, so long as we retain our faith, to be reconciled to God. Without faith, repentance is impossible. He that is without fear cannot be justified.

To conclude, brethren, be not over solicitous. Have confidence in the Lord with all your heart and lean not upon your own prudence. The Lord God is our helper, therefore we shall not be confounded. Be constant in faith. We are the children of the saints and look for that life which the Eternal will give to those who never change their trust in Him.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Lesson for to-day is an exhortation to Christian patience grounded on the fact that our sufferings here are not equal to the glory which awaits us in the life to come. Elsewhere St. Paul tells us that all who wish to lead a holy and pious life, according to the precepts of Jesus Christ, must suffer persecution. This was true in the early days of the Church when the sword was unsheathed against the faithful. It is true of all times. For the pious will ever have something to bear from heretics and unbelievers, from the wicked whose lives suffer by contrast with the lives of the good, and who are therefore incensed against them, from friends and brethren, from themselves and their own thoughts, and from the enemy of our salvation.

"I reckon," says the Apostle at the outset of the Lesson. He had some acquaintance with both sides of the reckoning. Recall what he says in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he recites what he suffered for Christ. Five times he was scourged, thrice he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, thrice he was shipwrecked. He underwent hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness and labor. He faced countless perils in his mis-

sionary journeyings — perils by land and sea — perils from the Jews and the Gentiles; perils from bad and insincere Christians. On the other hand, he knew something of the crown of justice that awaited him and all those who serve God faithfully. He was caught up into the abode of angels and saints — the Celestial Paradise — and heard and saw things there which human language is inadequate to describe. He could only say, quoting from the prophet Isaias, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. Trials are inevitable. The life of man upon earth is a warfare. God wishes us to possess eternal life, not merely by the title of inheritance as His adopted sons, but also by the title of merit. And to encourage us to persevere He holds up before us the prospects of rewards exceeding great.

Brethren, let us consider briefly to-day, the happiness of heaven. With the trials of this earthly life you are familiar. Joy comes sometimes, but it is transient and always followed by its opposite. "Laughter shall be mingled with sorrow and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy," says the Book of Proverbs. But in heaven we shall be happy without interruption or cessation. The

evils of earth will be far away. Neither death nor mourning nor labor nor weariness nor disappointments shall be able to enter there. Our present hopes of peace and rest will there find everlasting realization.

St. John, in the Book of Revelations, has described, for our consolation, the vision of the new Jerusalem — which he saw in Patmos. It was like, he says, a bride adorned for her husband. He bids us picture to ourselves a mighty city built and adorned throughout with all that is richest and most precious according to our earthly notions. Round about it are walls great and high, built of jasper-stone. Each of the twelve gates is of pearl and the streets are of pure gold. It is filled with the glory of the Lord and blazes like one mighty jewel. It has no need of sun or moon for the splendor of God enlightens it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the servants of the Lamb shall see His face, and they shall reign forever and ever. "They shall see His face." This is the happiness of heaven — the sight and fruition of God. It is important that we should understand this great truth. We shall see God and all that kingdom of mysteries which we know here only by faith. We shall see the three Divine Persons in their unity of nature. We shall see Jesus Christ, His Blessed Mother, the

Angels and the Saints. We shall take with us to heaven the loves and affections which sweetened our lives here on earth. The father and mother will know their children, and friends, separated by death, will be reunited forever. God will make known to us all that in any way concerns ourselves, whether past, present or to come. "O vision," exclaims St. Bernard, "in which we shall know all things on earth and in heaven, drinking draughts of knowledge at the fountain of all wisdom."

These are some of the thoughts that inspired the lives of the first preachers and followers of the Gospel, and of the saints of God in every age. These were the thoughts that were the only consolation given to our fathers, ground down by the most merciless laws that hatred of the Church has ever invented. What St. Paul says of the saints in his day applies to those through whom we have our faith. "Some were racked, not accepting deliverance that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trials of mockeries and stripes, moreover, also, of bonds and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword; distressed and afflicted, they wandered about in deserts, in mountains, in dens and in the caves of the earth." They were heartily

convinced with the Apostle that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us.

Brethren, let the same conviction animate us. We cannot be martyrs but let us be confessors. Let us sacrifice, for the sake of the glory to come, our wills and inclinations. Let us faithfully observe the commandments of God and of the Church though such observance sorely contravene the promptings of nature. Our time of trial will soon be over. God himself will be our recompense exceedingly great.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

St. Peter has been giving special exhortation to servants, to wives and to husbands. Now, lest he weary his hearers by too many details about the duties of particular classes of Christians, he concludes with a general appeal to all the faithful. There are few passages in Holy Scripture fuller of practical suggestions than this general appeal. In it the Apostle draws a picture of a perfect Christian, endowed with all the essential moral virtues. These are nine in number: unanimity, compassion, brotherly love, mercy, modesty, humility, goodness, patience and sanctity. And these virtues flow one

from the other — unanimity begets sympathy or compassion; compassion begets brotherly love; brotherly love, mercy; mercy, modesty; modesty, humility; humility, charity; charity, patience, and patience, holiness.

In the first place the Apostle prescribes unanimity. We must, like the multitude of believers spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles, have but one heart and one soul. We must live in union and harmony. We are all temples of the same Holy Spirit, which ought to be a bond of peace. And this is the lesson which St. Paul clearly and frequently inculcates. He tells the Romans to be all of one mind. He begs that the God of Patience will grant to the Corinthians that they be of one mind one toward another. He gives a similar exhortation to the faithful at Philippi. We are to be affected toward our neighbors as we are toward ourselves. If we take ourselves to be great people, let us have the same opinion about others. If we look down upon others as mean and inconsiderable, we must take the same view of ourselves and so eliminate all inequality. Concord among brethren is a protection stronger than any wall.

From unanimity proceed all the other virtues which the Apostle enumerates. The first of them is compassion, sympathy. St. Paul tells us what

Christian sympathy means when he says that we are to rejoice with them that weep. We must learn to look upon the happiness or the misfortune of our brethren as though they were our own. We know very well from experience, perhaps, how much consolation can be given by the mere presence of friends in our troubles, though no words be spoken. To realize that others really condole with us, somehow lightens our burden of sorrow. To feel for none, to harden one's heart at the sight of the afflictions of others, may be the fashion of this world. But we Christians must remember that we are brethren. The stronger we are the more merciful we ought to be in thought and word and deed. God makes us strong, not for ourselves alone, but for our weaker brethren also. Blessed are the merciful, said Our Lord in the Beatitudes, and St. Peter had not forgotten the saying. Blessed are the humble-minded, said the Master, and St. Peter reëchoes His words. And this modesty, or humility, of which the Apostle speaks, is that pleasing moderation of character which prompts a man so to regulate his conduct toward his brethren as to do or say nothing that can give offence to them, and which makes all allowances for their defects. It is a development of brotherly charity. It clothes those who possess it as with a

splendid garment. It pleases God; it pleases and edifies our neighbor. The Scripture tells us that a gentle answer turns away wrath, and only those who possess this moderation can make such answer.

Of course, St. Peter did not pass over the great duty of the Christian, that of the the forgiveness of injuries. He bids us not render evil for evil or abuse for abuse, but rather to bless those that injure us in word and deed. He that desires to lead a happy life and wishes to enjoy many days must follow the precepts of the Apostle. Furthermore, if we are to inherit the everlasting blessing hereafter, to which we are called, we must guard our tongues from evil. We must, as our Redeemer has told us, bless those that curse us, bless them and curse not. No curses can harm us if we be zealous followers of good, if we try to conform our lives to the standards God has set for us. Be not overcome by evil, but rather overcome evil with good.

There is one point in the Lesson for to-day to which, as it comes up but rarely in the Epistles and Gospels, we ought to give more than passing consideration. St. Peter tells us that we ought always to be ready to give some satisfactory answer or apology to everyone that asks of us the reason

of the hope of eternal life that is in us. He does not require that every one of us be able to account for all the truths in which we believe and to dispute about them. St. Paul requires that only from a bishop. Neither does St. Peter say that we should answer those of our enemies who with the desire of embarrassing us, ask us questions about our beliefs and practices. We are not to give holy things to dogs as Scripture says. All that the Apostle requires is that Christians, when questioned in good faith, should be able to give good grounds in a general way for their adhesion to that faith. Our faith is above all a reasonable faith. There is, be assured, nothing that so shocks outsiders who are seeking for the truth as to find Catholics ignorant of the first principles of their religion. And there is nothing that so tends to bring our beliefs and practices into disrepute as the stupid misrepresentations sometimes put forth by ignorant Catholics who are ashamed frankly to confess their ignorance. They are reasonably supposed to know all about their Church and their insane talk has been productive of incalculable mischief. Let me beseech you, brethren, never to attempt to expound Catholic doctrine unless you are competent to do so. Refer inquirers to those who are in a position to answer them, and in the meantime get a cate-

chism and study it. Remember that we sin against our obligations under the head of faith, not only by denying or doubting what God has taught, but also by neglecting to learn what God has taught. God made us to know him — to know Him especially as He has revealed Himself. Hence the necessity, if we are to save our souls, of being acquainted with the teachings of Holy Church, according to the measures of our opportunities and capacity. Hence the necessity of listening to sermons and instructions, if we have not the time or the taste to study for ourselves. If asked, for example, what we believe of Christ and why we believe in Him, we ought to be able to answer that He was proved to be the promised Saviour, because in Him are fulfilled the prophecies spoken of the Messiah. Because He confirmed His claims concerning Himself by miracles, and especially by His resurrection from the dead. If we are asked why we adhere to this or that doctrine of the Church in the face of heretics, we ought to be able to answer that we believe because the Church is infallible; she is, as the Apostle says, the pillar and ground of truth; to her was given power and knowledge to "preserve us from being carried away by every wind of doctrine," for Christ bade her teach all na-

tions and has promised to remain with her all days even to the end of the world.

Our answer should be kindly — filled with Christian moderation. There is no need of railing at Luther and Calvin and Henry VIII as some overzealous defenders of the faith are fond of doing. And it should also be borne in mind that, no matter how well we defend and expound our beliefs, we shall accomplish nothing unless we lead exemplary lives. Each of us brethren has the honor of his Church in his keeping, a fact which many of us fail to realize.

If we lived up to its teachings as outlined for us in this day's Lesson, if we were more affable and kindly, if we returned good for evil and blessing for cursing, if we were everywhere and always zealous for good, if we manifested in our daily lives that reverence for Jesus Christ and His holy will which the world has a right to expect from us, the kingdom of God would increase by leaps and bounds.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Lesson for the Sundays after Pentecost thus far have been taken chiefly from the Epistles of St.

Peter and St. John. Henceforth the preference will be given to St. Paul; and, in making her selections from his letters, the Church will follow the order in which they stand in the Canon of Scripture. Beginning to-day with the Epistle to Romans we shall read in turn the inspired instructions of the great Apostle to the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians and the Colossians.

To-day's Lesson, though it contains many things hard to be understood, is an eminently practical one. The sum and substance of it is that we who have been baptized and therefore dedicated to Christ — united to Christ — must keep up that union throughout our lives. We must live as He lived, in justice and holiness of truth. We must seek the things that are above; not setting our hearts upon the things that are of the earth, for we are dead to these things through baptism. Dead to sin, we must walk in newness of life. To be dead to sin means never to obey it again — never to suffer ourselves to be moved by it any more than a dead body.

It is interesting to see how St. Paul looks upon the rite of Baptism. Unless we grasp his notion of it we shall miss the whole significance of to-day's Lesson. "Know you not," says he, "that all

who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in His death." Now, to be "baptized in His death" means unto the likeness and representation of His death. Baptism in the Apostolic age was commonly by immersion. The whole body of the catechumen was plunged in the font. This has been changed; but the Church still insists that the regenerating waters shall flow over the head of him who receives the Sacrament. Christ died and was buried; the tomb closed over Him. When we are baptized we participate mystically, but really, in the death of Christ. When our heads are placed under the sacred waters, the old man, the son of sinful Adam, is buried; when we emerge, we are new men, the sons of God. Thus, alike by the external rite and the interior spiritual change wrought by that rite, baptism represents in us the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As He rose from the tomb to enter upon a new life, so we, who have been baptized, should lead an unchanging, unfading life of grace. As death hath no longer dominion over Our Saviour, so sin, which is spiritual death, should have no dominion over us.

We must not yield our bodies as instruments of iniquity, no matter how strong the lusts thereof, but rather make our members instruments of justice unto God. Brethren, ye have received the knowl-

edge of Jesus Christ; walk ye in Him. Ye have been baptized in Christ; put on Christ. Engrafted on Him by baptism, as the Apostle graphically puts it, you must, like young shoots joined to the stock of another tree, bring forth the fruits of a Christ-like life. You must avoid evil and do good. You must keep to the covenant you made when admitted to the sacrament of regeneration.

Brethren, our vocation as children of God, as members of the body of which Christ is the Head, means more than many of us seem to realize. Some are content to lead lives of merely natural goodness — sterile, barren, unproductive so far as eternity is concerned — thinking that we have done all that is demanded of us if we never harm anyone — if we are no worse than our neighbors. And yet it is written, "This is the will of God, your satisfaction." It is a precept of Jesus Christ that we should be perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect. We are here to serve God as God wills and thereby save our souls, and God has provided us not only with a rule of life but with an example which we are bound to imitate — the life of Christ. Those who lived under the old Law had the rule. God, who did such wonderful things to bind the chosen people to Himself, hath dealt far more generously with us. He sent His Divine Son,

born of a woman, to exercise human virtues with a human heart and soul — to do those things which men must do in order to be saved. Let us look at the life of our Master and Saviour, in the spirit of the publican in the Gospel who sought to see Jesus, who He was. In His life He exercised worship and he prayed; He was obedient to His parents; He worked for His bread; He had compassion on the poor and suffering; He was meek and humble in heart; He was patient; He tried to overcome the malice of His enemies; He suffered for righteousness and, dying, sought forgiveness for those who brought Him to the shame of Calvary. The Gospel may have gone out of fashion, the world is busy with its own poor philosophy, but through the ages still ring out the words, "Deny yourselves; take up the cross and follow me." To be Christians worthy of the name we must be imitators of Christ with St. Paul, with the other Apostles, with the martyrs and confessors — with all the Saints. Let not sin reign in your mortal body, but rather obey from the heart that form of doctrine which has been delivered unto you, walking in that narrow path in which the Son of God hath walked before us. He prayed much. We must be men of prayer. He was humble. We must keep down our pride. He was kind and merciful. We must be likewise.

He was patient. In patience we must possess our souls. He was poor. How can we justify our hunger and thirst for money, our attachment to the goods of this world, the sins we commit that we may increase our hoard. He forgave His enemies. Shall we return evil for evil, curse for curse, railing for railing? Brethren, remember that we are not talking about counsels of perfection — but about duties which are incumbent upon all of us as Christians. We are bound to lives of piety, of purity, of charity, of meekness, of humility, of resignation, of self-denial, after the commandment and example of Jesus Christ. The sooner we wake up to this fact, the sooner we realize our solemn obligations and try to fulfill them, the sooner we bring ourselves to see that life means something more than eating and drinking and toiling and sleeping, and that religion is not a matter to be taken up and put aside with our Sunday clothes, the better it will be with us when we go before Him to whom it is given to judge all men.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

"The wages of sin is death." After reminding the Romans of their obligations as members of the mystical body of which Christ is the head; after

exhorting them not to let sin reign in their members, and after holding out to them the consoling prospect of everlasting life, the Apostle concludes with a solemn warning to those who yield themselves to serve uncleanliness and iniquity — whose portion is everlasting death.

Let us consider to-day the subject of Hell. It is an unpleasant but profitable matter to think upon. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And there is no surer way of filling us with this salutary fear than an occasional visit in the spirit to the eternal prison which God has prepared for those who will not keep His commandments. "*Often go down to Hell during thy lifetime that thou mayst not have to go after death,*" says St. Bernard. The world to-day does not believe in everlasting punishment. The wish is, perhaps, father to the thought. And one cannot help suspecting that many of those who deny the existence of Hell have private reasons for so doing. But Hell is not abolished because men are unwilling to believe in it. God has spoken so distinctly on the subject that, all difficulties to the contrary notwithstanding, we must yield assent to His word. Let the world delude itself with sentimental considerations and with exaggerated notions about the mercy of God. Let us remember that the truth of the

Lord abideth forever, that the mercy of God is upon those that fear Him, not upon those who mock Him, and that he who despises Hell, or forgets it, will not escape it.

The Catholic doctrine of Hell is briefly as follows: All those who die at enmity with God, who depart hence with mortal sin in their heart, unrepented and unconfessed, are forthwith condemned to a state of suffering which knows no end. They become witnesses throughout eternity of God's almighty power and to his undying hatred of sin. Up to his last conscious moment the sinner if he seeks mercy will find it, for God wishes not the death of the sinner but rather that he be converted and live. But if he dies in his sins he will experience only stern justice. God will render to him according to his works and the sentence stands forever. For the very moment that a person expires his time of probation ceases. The night has come in which he can work no more. As the tree has fallen so shall it lie. "This is the Catholic faith," says the Athanasian creed, that "they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and them that have done evil into everlasting fire." God is holy, and therefore hates sin. God is just, and therefore will have satisfaction for the offences committed against him. God is wise and there-

fore requires punishment as a means of restoring the moral order. God in revealing Hell as one of the sanctions of His law, meant what He said. To think of Him as a Father who, after the manner of many earthly fathers, threatens without any serious intentions of executing His threats, is to insult His holiness, His justice and His wisdom.

Let us consider briefly the nature of the torments of the damned. As sin is a turning away from God and a turning toward creatures, a two-fold punishment is suffered by the lost — one privative, the pain of loss, the other positive, the pain of sense. The pain of loss is looked upon by theologians as the most dreadful of the punishments of Hell. St. Augustine thinks it so great a torment that no other pains known to us can be compared to it. The pain of loss is the feeling of regret for the folly which threw a great and lasting good for the sake of a petty and fleeting pleasure. God made us for Himself and the soul of man, freed from the bonds of the body, turns to Him as the needle turns to the pole. Imagine the sorrow of Esau over the loss of his father's blessing. Imagine the longing of a child who is separated from its parents. Call to mind, those of you who came hither from the old land beyond the sea, the sorrow that filled your hearts when you said your last farewell to the home

of your fathers. The bitterness and the longing of that hour, are, perhaps, with you yet. Oh! the pain of parting with father and mother and relatives and friends, whom you felt you would never see again this side of the grave. Take all the sorrows of all the partings of which Ireland has been the scene for the last half century, and lay them upon the soul of one man. You will then have only a faint idea of what is meant by the pain of loss — the eternal grief, shame, rage and despair of those whom God has bidden to depart from Him forever.

The positive punishment of Hell is called the pain of sense. It embraces all the torments not comprehended under the pain of loss, and is so called because it is produced chiefly by a sensible object — namely, fire. That there is a fire of some sort in Hell is taught in numberless passages of Holy Scripture. The fire of Hell, whatever its nature, is something real, and having for its end the infliction of pain. It is kindled by the wrath of God, acts upon the Spirit, and is not extinguished forever. And after the general resurrection the bodies of impenitent sinners will be joined to their souls to suffer with these as having been partakers of their iniquities. All their senses will receive punishment according to the words of the Gospel.

Their eyes will be afflicted with darkness, their hearing by the wailing of the other lost souls, their taste by hunger and thirst, and their sense of touch by the everlasting fire. Well did St. Paul say, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Brethren, let us remember that God sends no man to Hell. None are there save those who chose to go there — who persisted, despite all warnings, in walking in the broad and easy way, which leads to destruction. If there be any among you who walk in that way let them take heed to themselves in time, let them presume no longer upon the patience of God, let them do penance, lest they perish, and let them walk henceforth in the narrow path, which leads to eternal life.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

"If you live according to the flesh you shall die; but if by the spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live." Now to live according to the flesh is to indulge the sinful inclinations of our fallen nature — to follow the law of our members rather than the law of God. And the Apostle's meaning is not to be restricted to indulgence of sins of impurity; it includes every evil tendency

to which the children of Adam are prone. St. Paul is not to be understood as condemning moderate care of our bodies. What he forbides, under penalty of everlasting death, is such attention to them as leads to sin. By the spirit he means the grace of God, which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us in Baptism. No matter how strong our passions are, we can with the help of the spirit of God, overcome them all. And it is only such as live according to the promptings of the spirit who are worthy to be called the sons of God, joint heirs, with our elder brother, Jesus Christ, of the kingdom of God. We must deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Christ, if we are to share in His glory. The necessity of self-denial — of perpetual warfare against the flesh and its concupiscences, is perhaps the central thought in to-day's Lesson.

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit," says St. Paul to the Galatians; and then he goes on to formulate a long list of the works of the flesh, of which he says that those who do them shall not obtain the Kingdom of Heaven. Among those works he mentions impurity of various kinds — enmities, contentions, anger, drunkenness, and such like. Human nature is now much the same as it was in St. Paul's day, and we need look no farther

than our own hearts to be convinced of the fact. The world takes an easy view of all these things. It is getting back to the old pagan notions about human life and human destiny, which were summed up long ago in scorn by the author of the Book of Wisdom. "Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments; let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered; let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us leave everywhere tokens of our joy; for this is our portion and this is our lot." But, says the Scripture, they knew not, who thought thus, the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice. The world is losing the idea of sin and of man's duty to Him in whose image and likeness we have been created. The world ignores the patent fact that there is something wrong with human nature as we know it, and will not see that even in the interests of our present well-being man must restrain himself as with bit and bridle instead of giving loose reins to his passions. Our hearts are a battle-ground, whereon from the dawn of reason to our death-bed a perpetual warfare is going on between the powers of darkness and of light. Some passions are common to all men; others are the inheritance of comparatively few. First and worst of all is

the passion of impurity. Then comes the passion of pride. Then there is the passion of avarice. Then there is the passion of gluttony. Then there is the passion of sloth.

And this is by no means a complete list. Against them all, girded with the armor of God, we must contend, for God requires our whole heart and soul and strength. The world may take lenient views about impurity. We must keep our souls and bodies spotless from this vice, remembering what was said amid the thunders of Sinai, in the pages of Scripture, and last of all by Jesus Christ. We all know the meaning of pride. The natural man likes to be praised and to exalt himself. But against this passion stand commands and warnings which we cannot afford to neglect. Money, with the opportunities for power and sensual enjoyment which it brings, appeals strongly to the average man. But against the love of money God has cautioned us time and again. The natural man yearns to return evil for evil but God tells us that we must forgive if we hope to be forgiven and that we must overcome evil with good. The natural man is inclined to shirk his duties, temporal and spiritual. God reminds us that we are His servants and will one day be called to give an account of our labors. The life of man upon earth is, in the designs of

God, one long warfare between human inclination and Christian duty. We cannot be neutral. We must choose the part of the Lord who will be our reward exceeding great. "He who is not with Me is against Me," says Jesus Christ.

Now, can we, brethren, looking back upon the past, say with St. Paul, "I have fought the good fight?" What have we done or what are we doing to deserve the name of fighting? How many victories over our passions can we honestly say are set down to our credit in the Book of Life? How many of us are complying, or even trying to comply, with the great precept, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice?" How many of us, despite all the graces we have received, are any better than the heathen? Let us remember our dignity and our obligations — the solemn covenant we made when we were admitted to the Sacrament of regeneration. Let us put on the armor of God and seek His help, for without Him we can do nothing. Let us be earnest in prayer and diligent in the reception of the Sacraments. Thus shall we make sure of the divine assistance in the time of need. Thus, and thus only, shall we be able to overcome the corrupt inclinations of the flesh to please God, and live both a virtuous life here and a glory hereafter.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

To get anything like a fair insight into this day's Lesson we must go back a little. We shall find that St. Paul closes the ninth chapter of his Epistle with these words: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." And that he might impress upon his Corinthian converts the solemn lesson of self-distrust which he, despite his apostolic vocation and wonderful graces, had learned — that he might convince them that faith and baptism and the other sacraments avail nothing to salvation if good works be wanting, he reminds them of the experiences of the chosen people of God during their journey from the land of Egypt into the land of promise.

The Rabbins had a saying "whatsoever happened to the fathers is a sign to the sons," and St. Paul doubtless had this in mind when he wrote the passage to which you have just listened. There is no mistaking his meaning. He shows that as the gifts given to the Hebrew people were typical so were their punishments typical; and as we, upon whom the ends of the ages have come have received far greater gifts, so shall we, if we abuse them, receive greater punishments also.

Exclusive of women and children and the Levites, the Israelites in their departure from Egypt numbered more than six hundred thousand men fit for war, from twenty years and upward. Out of this mighty multitude only two, Caleb and Josue, were permitted by God to enter into the promised land. Even Moses himself, their leader, was, for one sin, denied the happiness of setting his foot within its borders. God led them through the Red Sea, which was a figure of Christian baptism. God gave them manna to eat, which was a figure of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. God gave them water from the rock, which was a figure of the side of Christ pierced by the lance of Calvary. God poured out upon them the treasures of His mercy and His fatherly kindness. But they tempted Him. They murmured against Him and asked why they had been brought out of bondage to die in the wilderness. They loathed the manna He sent them and yearned for the flesh pots of Egypt. They set up and worshiped an idol at the very foot of the mountain of the commandments. They committed fornication with the daughters of the Gentiles. For forty years they erred in their hearts — they would not walk in God's ways. Wherefore, He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. If we follow their example we shall be

condemned to even deeper destruction. Let what happened to our fathers, for the people of God in the Old Law are the spiritual ancestors of all Christians, be a sign to us. Let us not, as St. Paul says, covet evil things as they also coveted. And then he goes on to warn the Corinthians against certain sins to which they were particularly prone by reason of their character and circumstances. Some of them had fallen into the habit of eating meat which had been offered to idols and thereby became guilty of the crime of idolatry. That they believed that these idols were nothing made no difference. They were as a matter of fact taking part in false worship. Later on the Apostle deals with the question of the scandal which was given by such participation. There is in St. Paul's words a hint for us Christians to-day which is both weighty and timely. Let no considerations tempt you, brethren, to assist at anti-Catholic services. To do so will scandalize your brethren who will make your sin an excuse for their own. To do so will expose you to the danger of hearing things said against your faith which you have not knowledge enough to refute, which you will shrink from speaking of to those who can refute them and which in the end may deprive you of the peace and joy of believing. To do so is to disobey the spirit, if

not the letter, of St. Paul's admonition to the Corinthians.

Then the Apostle goes on to warn his converts against impurity. Corinth was declared by an old writer to be "the most impure of all the cities that are or have been," and the lewdness of its inhabitants was proverbial even among heathens. Our good Irish Catholics are celebrated as the purest people in the world. Nevertheless, a word of warning about this matter will not be superfluous. Keep your souls and your bodies pure. Be not led astray by the easy morality of the children of the world. The law of the Most High is plain, and He shall remember your sins. "I am the Witness and the Judge," saith the Lord. Guard your hearts from evil desires, from evil imaginations and from all complacency in past sins. Put a watch over your lips lest you speak of things which, as the Apostle warns us, should not be mentioned among Christians. Remember, that if any man violate the Temple of God, him shall God destroy. "Know you not that you are the temples of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Remember that none shall ascend to the Mountain of God or stand in His holy place save those who are pure in body and clean of heart.

The Apostle says, "Neither let us tempt Christ."

Against what tempting of Christ are we warned? First, against diffidence in the promises of God, for God is faithful. Second, against provoking the divine wrath by any sin whatever. For those who sin, tempt God to show forth His justice and His power in their punishment.

We are not to murmur against God. Rather should we be trustful and without complaint as beseems the sons of God who orders all things for the best. We are not to murmur against the ministers of God. The penalty of murmuring of which the Apostle reminds the Corinthians was the burning pestilence with which God afflicted the multitude of the children of Israel when they complained against Moses and Aaron, saying "You have killed the people of the Lord." Brethren, when we find ourselves beginning to find fault with those who warn us against sin and admonish us about our duties for our own good, we will do well to reflect on the sin of murmuring and its punisment.

Next comes a warning against self-confidence. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." We are to look back upon the record of the splendid privileges and terrible fall of the children of Israel, and learn from it the lesson of humility. With the memory of the sins

of Moses and Aaron before him, can we wonder that St. Paul feared that he might be a castaway? And if St. Paul, the firmest of all, feared, how much more should we? Do not, therefore, brethren, pride yourselves on your justice, but, rather, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Without a special revelation there is no one in this world, however just or perfect he may seem to be, who is not still liable to fall. Wherefore, we ought to be very diligent when temptations arise in asking the help of God's grace to overcome them, and we ought, moreover, always to remember that, though God has promised to make issue with temptation that we may be able to bear it, still he makes no such promise to those who, of their own will, put themselves in the proximate occasion of sin. For it is written, "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it."

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

St. Paul refers, in the third verse of this day's Lesson, to a sin of which the enemies of the Gospel at Corinth were guilty. Filled with hatred for our Blessed Lord they called him anathema, that is, accursed of God. No worse blasphemy could be spoken against Him, whom the voice of the Eternal

Father, coming down from Heaven, proclaimed to be the well-beloved Son of God and to whom all men are commanded to hearken.

There is no need to warn you, brethren, against blasphemy of this kind. No one indulges in maledictions against Jesus Christ except the demons and the lost and such as are active in uprooting the foundations of the faith — the disciples of the wretch who in the last century devoted himself to the destruction of the "infamous thing" — our Christian religion. But, though direct, diabolical blasphemy is unknown among us, the same cannot be said of indirect blasphemy, by which is meant the use of language which, albeit it be not intended as such, is of its own nature disrespectful to the Divine Majesty.

Blasphemy means speaking impiously or insultingly of God. It may be committed in many ways, over and above open mockery and contempt of Him. But the commonest way is by indulgence in the vice of cursing one's neighbors. Another way is by coöperation. We have not uttered maledictions ourselves, but we have knowingly provoked others to cursing, or we have encouraged blasphemers by our approbation, or, having authority over them, we kept silence when it was our duty to correct them for their wicked speech.

To curse is to pray — bad prayers, whether such prayers be short or long — whether they are uttered without ceremony or accompanied by the ridiculous solemnities which passion sometimes dictates. All those impious imprecations, by which we invoke on others the vengeance of God, are blasphemies of malediction.

Now, let us see how language of this kind is insulting to God as well as a violation of fraternal charity. It is neither proper nor necessary to repeat in this presence the common forms of imprecatory blasphemy. The young know them as well as grown-up people. Suppose now the case. A man or woman, who is stirred by some real or fancied injury from a neighbor, calls upon God to relegate that neighbor to Hell. Now, such a prayer is an insult to Almighty God, for God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live. Moreover, God is just, and the punishment you call upon Him to inflict, for what is in most cases a trifling wrong, is quite out of proportion. You outrage His justice as well as His mercy by your maledictions. Blasphemous cursing of one's neighbor is of itself a grievous sin and is frequently condemned in Holy Writ. "He loved cursing," says the Psalmist, "and it shall come upon him; he would not have blessing and

it shall be far from him; he put on cursing like a garment, and it went in like water into his entrails and like oil into his bones." I have said that it is "of itself a grievous sin," because sometimes those who utter blasphemous imprecations are so carried away by sudden rage that they do not advert to what they are saying. Moreover, some of the expressions which are used have become so corrupted that they cannot be said to be blasphemous any longer.

Sometimes parents curse their children to terrify them, without, however, having any real intention of blaspheming. But they are guilty nevertheless of the external sin of blasphemy just as a man who, to save his life, sacrifices to an idol, is guilty of idolatry, even though he is not an idolater at heart.

I said that imprecatory blasphemy is a sin against fraternal charity, as well as against the second commandment. We are obliged to love one another, while he that curses his brother wishes evil to him, which is to hate him. The Apostle warns us that he who hateth his brother is a murderer and hath not life eternal abiding in him. Can we imagine anything more abominable than to invoke perdition upon souls that have been redeemed by the blood of Christ?

Although curses as a rule, harm only those who utter them, they sometimes, as the word of Scripture shows, bring evil upon those who provoke them. This takes place often we are told when parents curse their children, or when poor people curse those who oppress them. Remember that the fact that a man has contracted the habit of cursing does not render him guiltless before God. Through letting himself fall by degrees into the habit, he has made himself responsible. The only thing for him to do is to retract that habit, and by diligently watching over himself gradually emancipate his tongue from the language of the damned. He must first of all make a good confession by way of reparation for the past with firm resolutions for the future; must every day renew that resolution, and if necessary impose some penance upon himself for each fall; must learn to keep his temper when vexed; must avoid such occasions as would lead him to sin, and must pray devoutly and frequently for the divine assistance. For the rest, brethren, take to heart the advice of St. Paul to the Ephesians "Let no evil speech proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the edification of faith; that it may administer grace to the hearers and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption."

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The subject of the chapter from which to-day's Lesson is taken, is the resurrection of the body. The Corinthians had already received this doctrine from the Apostle, but their notions of it needed correcting and their memories refreshing. They seem to have found it hard to get rid of the beliefs which they formerly held; or, it may be that some of them had been led astray either by those who thought that the regeneration of the soul in Baptism was the only resurrection, or by others who, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, laughed when St. Paul told them that the dead would live again. The immortality of the soul was a favorite tenet of the Greek philosophers, but the resurrection of the body was to them as undesirable as it was impossible. The unbelief of the ancient world in this matter is summed up in a single line by one of the Greek poets, "Once a man dies, he abides in death."

St. Paul sets himself to establish by many evidences that Jesus Christ, Who suffered for our sins and was buried, rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures. Christ rose again in a human body; therefore, it is possible for a human body to rise from the dead; and thus the Apostle destroys the one argument of the impugners of the

Gospel against the general resurrection. They said that the thing was impossible. He proves that the thing was done in the case of Jesus Christ. Then he goes on to deduce from the resurrection of the Saviour the resurrection of all mankind, and to appeal to it as the basis of the Apostolic teaching and of the Christian faith. "If Christ be not risen again," he tells the Corinthians, "then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." His preaching would be vain, being founded on the word of an impostor. Their faith would be vain for the same reason.

But, brethren, we shall not to-day occupy ourselves with reflections on the doctrine of the resurrection, grand and important though it be. We shall rather follow up the hint which the Apostle gives us about himself, in mentioning himself among those who saw the risen Christ. The thought of the great things that God had done to him, moved St. Paul to interrupt his argument by an act of humility. "I am the least of the Apostles who am not worthy to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the Church of God." Perhaps this is a fitting occasion to call to mind the wonderful working of divine grace as shown in the case of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

St. Paul owed his conversion to the dying prayers

of St. Stephen, the first of the martyrs. "If Stephen had not prayed," said St. Augustine, "the Church would not have had Paul." He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee's son and a Pharisee himself. He was born about the same time as Our Lord, at Tarsus, in Asia, and was at first called Saul. While yet a boy, he, according to the custom of the Jews who obliged their children, no matter what their prospects might be, to acquire some trade, learned to be a tent-maker. And, as a tent-maker, St. Paul, during the thirty years of his Apostolic labors, earned his daily bread. He was sent to Jerusalem to pursue the course of study which was to fit him for his chosen vocation of a judge and teacher in Israel. He tells us that he made greater progress than all his companions of the same age, and gave proofs of unmeasured zeal for the traditions of Judaism. It appears that he was absent from Jerusalem during the public ministry of our Lord for he never saw Him in those days. When he returned to the city he found that the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth were growing numerous among the people, and that the Law was being supplanted by the Gospel. Acting with the leaders of Israel he resolved to destroy the Christians.

Stephen, the deacon, was the first to die for the faith of Christ. Paul gave his vote against him,

and at the execution stood guard over the garments of those who stoned Stephen to death. He made up his mind that there was nothing he ought not to do against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, as he told King Agrippa. He shut the saints up in prison, he brought sentence of death to those that were condemned, he compelled them to blaspheme and in his mad rage against them persecuted them even into foreign cities. He was on his way to Damascus, full of hatred against our Lord's disciples, intending to bring back bound, to Jerusalem, any he might find there, when God intervened. A great light from Heaven was seen by Paul and his companions, and a voice said to him in the Hebrew tongue; "Saul, Saul, why persecutest Me?" "Who art Thou, Lord?" he answered. And the voice said, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecuted. It is hard for thee to kick against the good." Then said Saul: "Lord, what wouldst Thou that I do?" "Rise up!" said the voice, "and go unto Damascus, and there thou shalt know." His friends led him into the city, for he was blinded, and for three days he took no food or drink. He prayed and God heard his prayer. God sent to him a Christian named Ananias. This man was afraid to go to him at first because he knew the business on which Saul had come. But God said

"Go. This man is an instrument to My hands, whom I have chosen to proclaim My name before the Gentiles, before Kings and before the children of Israel. I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." Ananias instructed Saul, who was baptized in the name of Christ, and who forthwith began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God to the astonishment of all who heard him. Soon persecution threatened him and God sent him to Arabia. We do not know where he stayed or how long he stayed there, but, during that time, "separated from flesh and blood," he saw and spoke with Jesus Christ even as Moses had spoken with Jehovah. You may remember his account of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, given in the Eleventh Chapter of First Corinthians. No one of the Apostles told him that story. "I have received of the Lord," he says, "which also I have delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night on which He was betrayed, took bread, and, giving thanks, broke and said, Take ye and eat, for this is my body which shall be delivered for you; do this for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice after He had supped, saying: "This chalice is the new testament in my blood; this do ye as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me." God created a new

heart in the once fanatical scribe. Paul was filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ, so that he could say: "I live no more, but Jesus liveth in me." To hatred of the Gospel succeeded love of the Gospel, and for thirty years we see this man journeying to and fro, undeterred by suffering and perils of all kinds, preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, counting all things dross if only he might bring men to the obedience of his Master.

St. John Chrysostom sums up the story of his Apostolic life when he says that "the heart of Christ was the heart of Paul."

"By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been void." The Apostle here testified that he is not an Apostle through any merit of his own, and that all he is and all he has is due to the divine grace. And when, after expressing the low estimation he had of himself compared with the other Apostles, he adds that grace had not been wasted on him, and that he had labored more abundantly than all of them, we are not to suppose that humility has given place to pride. He wished to give glory to God by bearing witness to the work of grace which God wrought through him. God must not be disappointed in his gifts either by pride on the one hand or by ingratitude on the other.

For ourselves, brethren, let us learn to coöperate

with the grace of God according to St. Paul's example and St. Paul's precept. "We exhort you," he says, in Second Corinthians, "that you receive not the grace of God in vain." Grace is given to us that we may do good works and bring forth the fruits of penance. If we neglect its promptings we must answer for our neglect on the day when the Lord of the Vineyard will come seeking fruit from the trees upon which His care and bounty have been lavished.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

In to-day's Lesson, St. Paul defends himself against the charge of indulging in self-praise, which it appears had been provoked by the recital of his labors on behalf of the Gospel, as set forth in the ninth chapter of First Corinthians. He glories in the faith and good works of his spiritual children at Corinth. Upon their hearts, as upon a living book, he had inscribed the doctrines and the precepts of Jesus Christ. But he is careful to-day to say that he claims no merit for himself. The successful issue of his ministry he attributes to the grace of God. "We glory," he says, "in the happy fruit of our preaching among you; not, however, imagining that our natural strength brought us success, but mindful

that we cannot, of ourselves, think, much less do anything that will avail to the conversion or the salvation of souls." Now what St. Paul says of himself, every one of us must know, and acknowledge. It is but a repetition in another form of words of what Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospel: "Without Me you can do nothing." Without the aid of God's grace we are incapable of any supernatural good work. The divine assistance is absolutely necessary for even the least thing we can do for our salvation.

Brethren, there is nothing in the Christian life so wonderful, nothing so calculated to impress us with a sense of the benignity of Almighty God as the working of divine grace. As we think upon it we can find no words to express our wonder save those in which the Psalmist celebrates the divine condescension: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him; or the Son of man that Thou visitest him?" Man, though the last and crowning creation of God, is, after all, but a creature. Though God created him, as the Scripture says, to His own image and likeness, though He endowed him with a soul which is immortal, though He made him a little less than the angels and set him over all the works of His hands, though He gave him dominion over beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the creatures

that pass through the paths of the sea, man had of his own nature no claim to the happiness of Heaven, no hope of gazing upon the King in His beauty. If we now have such a claim and such a hope it is because He who dwelleth in the highest, and looketh down upon the low things in heaven and in earth, has of His own Divine Benevolence bestowed upon us a far higher gift than that of creation — the adoption of sons. Our vocation to eternal life is a purely gratuitous gift to us from God. As this vocation transcends our natural exigencies, so fidelity to it is beyond our natural powers, and so God cares for His adopted children with more than fatherly solicitude. We walk not alone; God is ever near us. His arm is around us and His lips are at our ear, though we do not listen.

Just as a guide goes before a traveler in the night to show him the way, so God enlightens us by His grace to know the paths of duty. But He is not content with pointing out to us the way. He strengthens us to walk therein. The grace of God works with us, gently pressing upon our wills, urging us onward toward good. Last of all, God by His grace perfects by the sovereign blessing of a happy death the work He begins and continues in us. God's grace, which is in the spiritual world, something like what sunlight is in the material world —

the principle of all life and growth and fruitfulness — is needed to begin, to carry on and to complete every good work. And so St. Paul tells the Philippians "that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish." Elsewhere he says that no man can worthily speak the name of the Lord Jesus save by the Holy Ghost. Remember that the Scriptures attribute to the Holy Ghost the diffusion of the graces merited for us by Christ.

The grace by which a man is united to God is of two species, viz: Actual and habitual. Actual grace is so called because it enables us to perform some special act of virtue. It is a transitory help by which God enlightens our mind and nerves our will. The thought comes to us to pray to God — this is a grace of the mind or of light. The resolve to carry this thought into effect is a grace of the will, or, of strength. Actual grace enables and causes the will to perform salutary acts. And the process by which God's grace works out salutary acts may be compared to the process of generation. God is, as it were, the father and the soul the mother of these acts. God's grace enters the soul, stirs up its natural energy, is received and developed by that energy and a good deed is brought forth, the common product of grace and man's free will. Without actual grace we can neither begin, continue or

achieve any salutary work — that is, one that leads to salvation. We can neither believe, hope, love or repent as we ought without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And so St. Augustine would have us bear in mind the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Who distinguisheth thee? or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received."

Actual grace is the grace of a moment. Habitual grace — also called sanctifying grace because of it we are sanctified or made holy — is a supernatural gift of God which remains in us in a constant and permanent manner, making us just, pleasing to God, heirs to eternal life and capable of eliciting works meritorious of that life. It is the wedding garment spoken of in the Gospel. By actual grace the soul is brought into the state of habitual or sanctifying grace, and in this state it abides till we incur the guilt of mortal sin.

Now, the grace of God is given to all. God wishes our salvation and His grace is absolutely necessary as a means. Therefore, we cannot suppose Him withholding this means. The Gospel tells us that our Father in Heaven maketh the sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and sendeth down rain upon the just and the unjust. To all the

just God grants the needful graces to enable them to observe all His Commandments. It is always a man's own fault if he fail in his duty to God or yield to temptation. To all sinners, even those who are blind and hardened, God extends graces sufficient to enable them to avoid sin and to repent. "The Lord delayeth not His promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently, not willing that any should perish but that all should return to penance." Whatever our needs may be, however great our temptations, God's grace, which is to be had for the asking, will enable us to meet them. "My grace is sufficient for thee," said God to St. Paul, when the Apostle begged that he might be delivered from his sore trial.

Brethren, mindful of the necessity of God's grace, let us use the means to obtain it in the fullest measure — and those means are prayers and the Sacraments. When we perceive awakening in our souls, affections, leanings, inclinations toward good, let us remember that they are inspired by God and correspond with them. These inspirations are given not idly, but for a purpose. If we neglect them we must render an account of them to God. Let us take to heart the admonition of the Apostle: "We helping do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain." Happy will it be for us when we

go before God if we can say with St. Paul: "Thy grace in me hath not been void."

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

In the third chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul undertakes to prove by various arguments that justification comes not from the observance of the Jewish law, but from faith. The gist of it is that without faith it is impossible to please God. The whole chapter is obscure, but to-day's Lesson makes particularly difficult reading. In fact, there is one sentence in it of which interpreters say that nothing harder to be understood can be found in the whole range of the Apostle's writings. However, one point is made sufficiently plain, namely, that the inheritance of eternal life is dependent upon — conditioned by — faith, of which Jesus Christ is the object and the giver. "I am the Way," says Our Lord; "no man cometh to the Father but by Me." Faith is the root and foundation of all justification. Without it, acceptable service of God is impossible. For no man can hope in God or love God unless first he believes that there is a God worthy of hope and of love.

Faith, as we know from the Catechism, is a Di-

vine, God-given virtue, implanted in our souls whereby we believe without doubting all that God, speaking in divers ways and at different times, has made known to men about Himself and about human destiny, and has authorized His infallible Church to proclaim throughout all generations, because He is the God of truth and omniscience. Faith puts the future and the invisible before our eyes and we accept its teachings because, as the writer tells the Hebrews, it is impossible for God to lie, and because with Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. God spoke to man to tell him the things that are for his peace and comfort, which give a meaning to life and an illumination to death. He demands our assent to His word and He, by the virtue of faith given to us, the moment we are received into fellowship in His Church, enables us to give that assent. Many of the truths of revelation are beyond our understanding; nevertheless we must accept them with the same certainty with which we accept facts that are of our own knowledge. Faith, then, is holding on by our will to God's word simply because it is His word, and just as firmly as if we saw it with our minds. As a little child obeys its mother and believes what she says, simply and solely because it recognizes her right to command and her claims upon its trust — without any ques-

tion as to her knowledge or her truthfulness, so the children of God accept the Word of their all-Holy, all-Wise Father. The obedience of faith is simply putting into practice in the spiritual life a principle which all men put into practice in practical life. No man pretends to believe only that which he has of his own knowledge. Many facts, about which we have no doubt or question, we accept on the word of others. None of us have seen Pekin or Pretoria. Nevertheless, we are satisfied that there are such places, and that certain events have happened there, relying on the assurance of trustworthy persons who speak from personal knowledge of the same.

There are three points which we must remember, then, in connection with faith. First, it is the gift of God; second, it is exercised upon truths revealed by Him; third, the reason why we believe these truths is the authority of God.

It is the gift of God. St. Paul says, "By grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God lest any man glory." By nature we have the powers of will, memory and understanding. When born again of water and the Holy Ghost, we receive the virtues of faith, hope and charity — three new powers of the soul to be used in working out our salvation. We use our will and memory and understanding — our rea-

son, in short — in acquiring explicit knowledge of the facts of revelation, and then faith comes in. We accept these facts, not because they satisfy our minds or our hearts, but simply because they are the Word of God.

Faith is exercised upon the deposit of faith — that is, the whole body of truths which God has revealed — nothing more and nothing less. There can be no such thing as picking and choosing. The man who says to himself "I am a Catholic but I do not believe this or that doctrine of the Church," has suffered shipwreck of the faith and is a Protestant. The man who lets himself seriously doubt the infallibility of the Pope or the wrongness of murder, impurity or suicide, sins against the duty of faith. It is one thing, however, to realize the difficulties which are urged against points of Christian teaching, but it is quite another to waver in our assent to those points because of such difficulties. God can do more things than man can understand. In the world to come our faith shall pass into vision. Here we must be content to believe, holding fast to the hope set before us which St. Paul calls the anchor of the soul pure and firm.

Now, as the possessors of the grace of faith, we have certain duties. The first is to preserve it, for it can be lost, and once it is lost our lot is a sad one.

No matter what natural virtues we may practice, no matter how good and praiseworthy our lives are before men, without faith our virtues avail not unto life everlasting — we are pagans. We must guard the faith. No man exposes to wind and rain which will surely extinguish it, the light which he needs to find his path in the darkness. And yet this is what Catholics do, who expose themselves rashly to such occasions of infidelity as the company of persons who question and rail at Catholic belief, or who read books opposed to it. A bad book is the very worst form of bad company.

In the next place our faith must rule our lives. St. James says: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? . . . Even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." We must be Catholics by practice as well as by belief; our faith must be a principle of action, otherwise it will go hard with us when we shall be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. It will profit us little to believe that God made us to know Him, love Him and serve Him if, as a matter of fact, we are votaries of the world, the flesh and the devil. It will profit us little to believe that Christ will come to judge the liv-

ing and the dead, if we live heedless of the judgment. It will not avail us to believe that God will render to every man according to his works if we treat God as though He were a considerate person who really will not be half so hard upon us as the priests say. It will avail us nothing to believe that no man can serve two masters if we neglect God and serve Mammon. It will avail us nothing to believe according to the words of Scripture that covetous men and unjust men, and haters of their brethren, and thieves and drunkards and adulterers and fornicators and those who stir up discord will be shut out from the Kingdom of God, if our lives are defiled by avarice, thievery, contentions, drunkenness and impurity. It will avail us little to have believed that the Church speaks to us with the authority of God Himself, if we take no heed of her precepts — if we neglect the Sunday Mass, the yearly confession and communion and our other duties as members of the household of the faith. Jesus Christ has spoken words which we shall do well to take to heart. "Not every one that saith to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Brethren, St. Peter tells us that "judgment will begin at the house of God." It will begin with those

to whom God gave the peace and joy of believing and their judgment will be seven-fold heavier than the judgment of those who were never called to faith and fellowship in the Church.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

A great many people take easy views about the sin of drunkenness. They speak of it in a kindly way as "the good man's failing." As a corrective of such views it behooves both those who are addicted to this sin and those who would palliate its enormity to observe that the inspired Apostle counts it among the things whose doers shall not obtain the kingdom of God. Shameful in itself, drunkenness is the fruitful parent of other shameful disorders. Its very commonness has blinded us to its enormity and we forget as we watch, half in pity half in amusement, the antics of its victims, that in Holy Scripture it ranks in foulness next to the sin of impurity. Let us to-day consider it from the point of view of St. Paul. Let us see wherein its malice lies. Let us also contemplate some of its results upon those who commit it, upon their families and upon the moral, social and religious life of the community.

A man is guilty of the sin of drunkenness who knowingly and willingly indulges in drink to the extent of depriving himself of his reason. The signs of perfect drunkenness are as follows: 1. Inability to distinguish between right and wrong — to discern as Scripture says between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean. 2. Inability to remember what one did while under the influence of drink. 3. Indulgence, while under the influence of drink, in words and actions which are altogether at variance with one's ordinary manner of behavior. Furthermore, a man is morally responsible for the crimes committed in drunkenness if he foresees, at least to some extent, relying on past experience, that such crimes are likely to result from over-indulgence in liquor. Those crimes are willed when their causes are willed. And drunkenness is willful not only when a man deliberately sets out to get drunk but also when, knowing the danger of so doing, he exposes himself to occasions of drunkenness which he can and should avoid.

Perfect drunkenness, if voluntary, is a mortal sin, as the Scripture says and as reason itself dictates. God has made man to His own image and likeness, and this likeness consists in the fact that He has given us souls which are endowed with understanding. Reason is the gift which essentially

distinguishes man from the beast of the field. Now a man who drinks so as to obscure this supreme gift of reason mars the divine handiwork in himself and lowers himself, for the time being, to the level of brutes. The lower nature, freed from the restraints of the higher, asserts itself and the vilest passions rage without control. The Scripture puts the matter with awful simplicity when it says that "wine taketh away the understanding," and when it says again "be not drunk with wine wherein is luxury" — that is, the occasion of impurity.

If our people have a besetting sin, it is the sin of drunkenness. This is not a pleasant statement, but its truth cannot be questioned. Taking into account their national characteristics, they are the last people in the world who can with safety indulge freely in intoxicating liquors. Their nature is too ardent — too excitable. And yet the use of strong drink among them is a deeply rooted tradition. There is no hospitality without it. There must be drink at weddings, drink at christenings and drink at wakes. There must be drink when a friend comes along. Drink is looked upon us as a sort of panacea. It is good in winter to keep one warm, good in summer to keep one cool — good in dry weather to relieve dryness and good in wet weather to keep out wetness. And the very worst item in

the tradition is the custom of treating, which obliges many a man to take more than is good for him and more even than he wants that he may retain his standing for cleverness and gentlemanliness. The great crimes committed by our people are almost universally done under the influence of drink. Their neglect of their religious duties is generally to be attributed to drink. Their neglect of the promptings of nature in regard to the care of their children is likewise due to drink. You have, brethren, heard with interest if not with approval the statement of the Irish bishop who solemnly asserted that drink has filled more graves in the old land than famine ever did, that it has brought more sorrow upon it than all the partings of which its shores have been the scene.

Drink is the most ordinary and most dangerous stumbling-block in families. What future is there in this world or the next for children brought up in miserable dilapidated houses, neglected by unnatural drunken mothers or maltreated by brutal drunken fathers? In due time they will walk in the same paths leaving to their offspring in turn the fatal inheritance which blasted their own lives.

Drunkenness at the present day prevails much more among the laboring classes than among the higher social grades. Now no man dependent on

his day's wages for the support of his wife and children can afford to drink. Listen to what the Scripture says: "He that loveth wine shall not be prosperous;" "A workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich, and he that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." In no department of human life is the truth of the last words of this text so clearly demonstrated as in the case of drunkards. Fondness for liquor is a habit contracted like other bad habits. The first drink was not pleasant, the second was less disagreeable, the third still less so, and so in a short time, perhaps, despite all protestations to the contrary, the habit takes root, an appetite is implanted which must be satisfied despite the commands of God, the dictates of common sense, and the promptings of parental love. There is a passage in Holy Writ which we cannot hear too often. "Who hath woe? Whose father hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who falls in the gutter? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath red eyes? He who passeth his time in drink."

Now there is one point which I wish to emphasize for the benefit of those who may be disposed to console themselves by the reflection that, though they sometimes are a little under the weather, they never get theologically drunk. Imperfect drunken-

ness, though not a mortal sin in itself, is often a mortal sin by reason of circumstances. 1. Grave scandal may result from it as is evident. 2. It may become mortal by reason of a bad intention. Men do drink to excess to nerve themselves for the commission of grievous sin. 3. Injury to health is another item. Excess in drink, though that excess may never reach the degree required for a mortal sin, is slow suicide. 4. Injury to the rights of one's family and the sorrow and shame and anxiety which are the portion of the wife and children of an intemperate man must not be lost sight of.

Brethren, beware of the demon of drink. If you yield to it you have nothing to hope for either in this world or the next. Do all you can to inspire your children with a horror of it. Never send them into barrooms. Never encourage them, out of a perverted sense of humor, to take it "like their fathers." Never give it to them even in case of illness unless the doctor orders it. To do these things is to run the risk of starting them in the way which leads to destruction, and in which so many walk to the everlasting sorrow of their parents. Never tempt any man to drink of whose weakness you are aware. And remember that Jesus Christ suffered in His passion the pangs of thirst that He might atone for the sins of men against the virtue of tem-

perance. If any of us have sinned in this way, let us beg of our crucified Lord the grace never to offend again.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Lesson for this day is an exhortation to Christian consistency. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have bound ourselves to a life of holiness. We have received the Holy Spirit of God; we must shape our conduct according to the promptings of the Spirit. By prayer, self-denial, and all the other means which Christ has commanded and the saints have practiced, we must labor to subdue the inclinations of fallen nature — to avoid the works of the flesh, of which last Sunday's Lesson contains so fearful a catalogue, and to do the works of the Spirit.

We must avoid evil and we must do good. It is not enough to keep our souls unspotted from sin. We must bring forth the fruit of a virtuous life. The example and teachings of Christ, the means He left to enable us to conform to that teaching and example, were not intended to be the special possession of a few, as so many of us seem to think nowadays; they are the inheritance of all who belong to the household of the faith. Brethren, if there is

one thing which more than another we need to realize it is this: that merely natural goodness such as the world applauds will not suffice to deserve for us the reward exceeding great. Worldly standards are good as far as they go. It is an excellent thing to be honest, kind, sober, self-respecting.

But, if we are satisfied to lead merely orderly, decent lives, how much better are we, after all, than the average self-respecting heathen? How often have we not heard Catholics say that they never did any harm to any one; that they provide for their families and get along well with their neighbors by way of palliating their neglect of weighty religious duties? As members of human society we do well to comply with the customs and laws which define our duties toward our fellow citizens. As members of the Church of God, we have other and higher duties, the strict performance of which is the sole condition of our attaining to the eternal inheritance of the sons of God. God demands piety — that is, fidelity to the requirements of our vocation as members of His Church. What those requirements are we know, or ought to know. And if we do not know, the world itself can tell us; the world which is so often scandalized by the discrepancy between our obligations and our practice.

We need to be on our guard lest we absorb Prot-

estant notions of religion. Our separated brethren, recognizing no infallible Church commissioned to teach them with divine authority, make their own religion, each for himself. The Christianity of most of them is a merely natural religion supplemented with some fragments of Catholic teaching. It is humiliating to note, by the way, that they sometimes produce more fruit than many a carefully tended tree that cumbers the ground in the vineyard of the Catholic Church — that they display more interest in the relics of truth which they possess than we do who are heirs of the entire deposit of faith. The Catholic theory of religion is altogether different from the comfortable Protestant view. Christ did not say to those whom He addressed, "Believe what you please," but "Listen to Me"; believe My doctrine whether you understand it or not. Keep my commandments whether they please you or not." And when He went to His Father He provided for the continuance of His Gospel. "As the Father sent Me," said He to the Apostles, "I also send you." Through the Church which He founded the Son of God still speaks to us. Her teaching is His teaching. Her commands are to be regarded as His. "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." Believing, as we profess to believe, in the authority of

the Church the only thing for us to do is to submit to that authority with a good heart. Merely nominal membership in the Church without attention to our obligations, will not merit for us eternal life. "Be not deceived," says the Apostle; "God is not mocked." Plausible talk may satisfy man and help us to deceive ourselves, but it will not deceive God. He will reward us according to our works. In doing good we must not fail. And a special form of doing good is especially commended by the Apostle, viz., the practice of Charity toward our brethren. We must avoid envy, we must correct one another in all patience, and, while showing kindness to all men, for all men are our brethren, we must be especially kind to those who are of the household of the faith.

A word on each of these points. Envy is, surely, the most contemptible of the vices. The envious man, instead of being glad in the prosperity of his neighbor, is saddened thereby. He somehow sees in the good fortune of his neighbor a sort of wrong done to himself. He murmurs against the justice of God, Who, he fancies, ought to be more discriminating in the bestowal of His favors. He indulges in uncharitable thoughts and in bitter words against his neighbor — perhaps he comes to hate him. Envy is wisely classed among the seven capital sins,

because it is the fruitful parent of other sins. Furthermore, there is something peculiarly devilish about it. It is jealousy of God's bounty to us that prompts the spirit of evil in his ceaseless efforts against us. Brethren, if we are to enjoy peace of soul in this world and possess Eternal Life in the next, let us beware of the vice of envy. Let us rejoice in the success of our brethren; try to deserve an equal share of God's bounty by fidelity in His service, and, whether it be given or not, humbly adore the Divine Providence which disposes all things unto good. Let not our eyes be evil, because God is good to others.

Fraternal correction is one of the most difficult duties which Christian charity imposes, and because it is difficult our Lord has told us how it is to be done. If it is not prudently performed it will do more harm than good. To warn a man who is standing on the brink of Hell is surely as kindly an act as to warn one who is in danger of falling over a precipice, and untactful speech will be quite as disastrous in one case as in the other. There is a story told about an artist who while decorating the dome of St. Paul's in London, stepped back to see the effect of his work, even to the edge of the scaffolding. One more step and he was a dead man. His assistant, instead of shouting, simply threw a

pot of paint over the picture. The painter stepped forward and the peril was past. Beware of interference when other people better qualified and more nearly bound, by according to the order of charity, are at hand to perform this delicate service of fraternal correction. Beware, too, of a rough, reproachful manner which will excite anger rather than compunction and so make bad worse. And these are points which persons who are called upon to reprove and correct the erring, not merely from charity but from the higher title of justice — as one of the duties of their state — will do well to bear in mind.

In fine, brethren, while showing good-will to all men and malice toward none, let us be especially kind to all those who have the same faith and the same hope, the same prayers, sacrifice and sacraments as ourselves. This was the distinguishing mark of the early Christians. They loved one another not in word only, but in deed and in truth. This was the spirit which, in his old age, when he was no longer to preach to his flock, the Beloved Disciple was unwearied in impressing upon the faithful at Ephesus, "My little children, love one another," "It is the Commandment of the Lord, and if you fulfill it you have done enough."

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

In this day's Lesson, St. Paul makes a remark which to the thoughtful reader is certainly somewhat puzzling. Why should we pray to God that the Ephesians might be enabled to know that, which, in the next breath, he declares to surpass all knowledge? Some Scripturists understand the Apostle to be making a sort of comparison between knowledge of the charity of Christ and knowledge of earthly things. Worldly wisdom is good. To know Him in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge is better. Others think that St. Paul means to say that he asks God to give the Ephesians a lively, realizing sense of the charity of Christ; which excels the merely speculative appreciation that is so often found among Christians in every age. They believe, but their faith is cold and fruitless. Others think that the Apostle wants the Ephesians to attain to a fuller knowledge of the divers ways in which Christ has manifested his love for the children of men. What He did, we can readily learn from the Gospels, wherein are recorded His words and works. To understand why He lived, labored and died is another matter. For, when we touch this question we touch the tremendous mystery of Infinite Love. We know that Christ

hath visited His people and wrought their redemption. But, we may well make our own the question of the Psalmist: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that Thou dost visit him." Here, surely, we stand face to face with something which, as St. Paul says, surpasseth all knowledge — something which in breadth and length and height and depth is comprehended only by the saints in Paradise. We can understand how the Son of God might pity us and show mercy toward us. That He should love us even as the Father hath loved Him, from everlasting, and with a depth and tenderness as far transcending all earthly affection as the Creator transcends the creature, we cannot understand.

St. John tells us that the "Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Lord and Maker of all things assumed our nature, became a man like to us in all things, sin alone excepted, shared not only our nature, but our distress and humiliations, our trials and temptations, and delivered us from everlasting death by submitting to the shameful death of the cross — and all this not through any necessity, but through deliberate choice. The Eternal Son of the Eternal, by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was made nothing that was made — He who holds the seas in the hollow of His hand — He

who sets the stars in their courses — He who possesses all power in Elder Brother, bone of our bone and Heaven and earth — He became flesh of our flesh. Let us put aside for a little while all worldly cares and thoughts, lifting up our eyes to where Jesus Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father. Let His heart speak to our heart. He loved us with an everlasting love as the Scripture says — knew and loved every one of us before the foundations of the earth were laid. And when in the fullness of time He was born of the Virgin Mary each of us had a place in His mind. It is nearly two thousand years ago since Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. Realize if you can that in His passion He died for you and for me, whom this world has known for only a few short years. Our hearts are stirred as we read of those men who freely laid down their lives for their friends or for their country's welfare. What one of us can listen unmoved to the story of the Swiss peasant who, when defeat seemed inevitable, stepped forward, and gathering into his breast a whole sheaf of the enemy's spears, opened the way for victory and freedom. Why, brethren, are we so heedless of what Jesus Christ has done for us in delivering us from everlasting death? We like, perhaps, to imagine that had we, like His Apostles, been privileged to see

His face and hear His voice while He walked on the earth, we would have been more devoted to Him than they were. But, after all, how much better are we than Peter was? Christ's words are, by the ministry of the Church, ever sounding in our ears. The works of mercy, which He did, are recited for us Sunday after Sunday. But He has not been content to abide with us as a memory only. "I will not leave you orphans," He said in His discourse after the Last Supper.

His delight is to be with the children of men, and in His wisdom and might He has found a way to satisfy the yearnings of His heart. In the Blessed Sacrament He dwells for their comfort and consolation among His chosen ones in every nation under Heaven. More than this, He gives Himself to us to be the food and support of our souls as we pursue our weary way along the paths of this life to eternity. And how, brethren, do we look upon all these manifestations of the charity of Christ? Do we not deserve the reproach which He so often uttered against His disciples: "O ye of little faith." Have we a single spark of that warm personal devotion for Our Lord which is our duty and our privilege? Have we ever let Him enter into our hearts where He longs to abide? Have we not rather kept Him standing outside the door because

we did not choose to find room for him within?

Brethren, we think much of the love of friends and relatives and we do well, but let us think also of the love which Christ has for us. Let us, in gratitude, try to have some such feeling for Him as we have for those whose good-will and attachment help to fill our lives with gladness, remembering that human love is but a shadow of God's love for His creatures. Let us make His will our will. For Eternal Wisdom has told us that fidelity to God's commandments is the supreme proof of our love for Him.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Brethren, there is a world of meaning in the short Lesson to which you have just listened. That we may, as the Apostle says elsewhere, be perfect, furnished unto every good work, let us receive the instruction of wisdom and justice and judgment contained in these words which, from his prison in Rome, he addressed to the faithful at Ephesus; and, not only to them, but to all believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul's prayer, "I beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which you are called,"

has been the prayer of the pastors of the Church in every age, and never, perhaps, was there greater need of exhortation on this point than there is to-day. Our religion, brethren, means a vast deal more than many of us, who are influenced by daily contact with the practical, easy-going, every-day world, appear to be aware. This world has a comfortable gospel of its own. Its votaries believe only what they please, do what they like within the bounds of human decency, smile at old-fashioned exhortations to penance and self-denial, worship Mammon, the word of Christ to the contrary notwithstanding, and die with the pleasant conviction that, if there really be a Hell, God will hesitate before He sends respectable American citizens thither. In the face of notions like these — which fit in so nicely with our natural inclinations, and to which many are disposed to give ear — the ministers of the Gospel must cry out and cease not. Woe to them if they allow their flocks to be inveigled into strange pastures. They must, as St. Paul charged Timothy, preach the Word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine by way of antidote to the preaching of those who teach, not according to the truth, but rather according to the desires of their own hearts.

Now what is the vocation to which we are called? And what are the duties attached to it?

"God," says St. Peter, "hath called us from darkness into His marvelous light." God hath called us from the ways of perdition to the paths of salvation. God hath called us to fellowship in the one true Church. Dwelling in light inaccessible and looking down upon all things in the heavens and the earth, He hath lifted up the needy from the dust and the poor from the dunghill and given us the adoption of His sons. He hath called us unto His kingdom and glory. That by good works we may make our calling and election sure He holds out to us with bountiful hand the graces which we need.

Now citizenship in the kingdom of God has onerous duties. We must make the Gospel of Jesus Christ the rule of our lives, and that Gospel is still in force though it may be somewhat out of fashion. Advanced thinkers coolly tell us that civilization would go to smash in twenty-four hours if men attempted to live up to the doctrine contained in Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. This statement shows how far the world has wandered from God in its pursuit of success and material progress. Nevertheless Christ has said with terrible distinctness, "If any man will come after Me let him deny

himself and follow Me." "You cannot serve God and Mammon." "He who hateth his brother is a murderer." "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments." "Except you do penance you shall all perish." "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you." They ought to bring home to us the solemn fact that it is not enough for us to put on our religion with our Sunday clothes and live like respectable heathens for the balance of the week. And remember that these words of our Lord are not addressed to those who wish to be perfect but to Christians generally. They are rules of life which all are bound to follow. They are hard for flesh and blood, but then Jesus Christ has told us that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and that only the violent shall bear it away. And he has not been content to lay down rules of conduct. The very things which he tells us we must do in order to be sacred, He himself has done. He has felt human troubles, battled with human infirmities, exercised human virtues. For Christ, besides that he is God, is also true man. He exercised worship and prayer. He exercised obedience. He suffered

poverty and weariness. He fasted. He worked for his daily bread. He suffered for righteousness. He forgave His enemies. He was meek and humble of heart.

"I am the way and the truth and the life," said Our Lord to Thomas, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Surely this is plain enough. It is only by being imitators of Christ, by making His teaching and example the practical rule of our lives, that we can, as St. Peter says, "make our calling and election sure." Many a man who lived otherwise has been painfully surprised on going before the judgment seat to find himself rejected as an unprofitable servant. "Not everyone that saith to Me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Apostle, you will notice, specifies one of the duties of our vocation and tells us how to fulfill it. That duty is the exercise of fraternal charity. The children of this world may have their jealousies and their revenges and their pride and their self-sufficiency and their rivalries. It must not be so with us. To unity of faith must be joined the unity of brotherhood. We have redemption through Christ; we have all entered the Church by the same door — baptism; we all believe the same

divine doctrines; we all address God as our Father; together we form one body of which Jesus Christ is the head; we are all temples of the one Holy Spirit of God; we have one common hope of eternal life. "Why then," as the prophet says, "doth every one of us despise his brother?" Let us rather be of good will the one toward the other, making allowances for one another's defects, seeing that not one of us is without his own share of infirmities, and bearing with one another in love, remembering what is written in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the early Christians, "And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul."

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Lesson for the day is taken from the preface of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Corinth was a city of Greece whose people abounded in riches and who were given to the vices of pride and impurity. St. Paul's first stay there lasted eighteen months, during which time he founded a church composed principally of pagan converts. Four years afterward, being then far away from Corinth, he got news of arguments and quarrels among the believers there. His solicitude for all

the churches founded by him was like the anxious care of a mother separated from her children. In the absence of Timothy, who usually acted as his secretary, he availed himself of the services of a certain Sosthenes and to him dictated the celebrated letter known as the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In it he denounced the errors and vices which had arisen, and answered certain questions which had been debated concerning the eating of meat which had been offered to idols, concerning the single life, marriage, mixed marriage and the right of divorce, and lastly concerning the resurrection of the dead. To understand why disorders and disputes had come in we must remember that the majority of the Christians of Corinth were drawn from the very lowest classes; that the faith which they had received had not effaced their natural traits of vanity, light-mindedness and love of novelty, and that St. Paul, knowing their weaknesses, had spoken to them as to little ones in Christ — had preached to them only the rudiments of the Gospel. He says: "I gave you milk to drink, not meat; for ye were not able as yet"; and he reminds them that they are children still.

The Apostle begins by assuring the Corinthians that he makes the grace of God, given to them by their union with Jesus Christ, the subject of his con-

tinual thanksgiving. This is a thought worth dwelling upon — the grace of God given us in Jesus Christ. Every day in the holy Mass the priest bids us lift up our hearts and give thanks to the Lord our God. How few of us perhaps realize what that invitation means, or, realizing, take any trouble to comply with it.

"Without Me," says Our Lord, "you can do nothing." We can do nothing worthy a reward at the hands of God the Remunerator, save with the help of divine grace — the sanctifying power and influence of the Holy Ghost. The greater part of men live as if they had no souls. Of the needs and disorders of the body they are conscious. Of the needs and disorders of their souls they take no heed. They know in a general way that they can be saved only by grace. But what grace is, how it is obtained, how increased, how lost, they do not know.

The grace of God was purchased for us by the passion and death of the God-man, Jesus Christ. It is the Divine presence and operation of the Holy Spirit of God in the soul of man. The sin of the first man was the casting of God out of His own Temple and the bringing down the divine displeasure upon himself and his progeny even to the latest generation. In sin did our mothers conceive us.

and we are born children of wrath. And there was no hope for us had not the charity of Christ, which surpasses all understanding, been manifested on man's behalf even to the shedding of blood. We are born again through Christ into a new and supernatural state — not the state of original justice which the first man enjoyed until his fall, but in a state like to, though distinct from it. We are made the sons of God by adoption. The charity of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us.

The grace of God is distinguished into these three kinds, viz., preventing grace, which is the guidance of God directing us in our actions; co-operating grace, which is the help God gives in the paths He points out to us, and perfecting grace, which crowns the work God has begun in us. So that God is the author and perfecter of our salvation. And all this He does, as the word grace signifies, out of His own bounty. The first grace He gives us is the grace of baptism when dwelling on high and looking down on the low things on earth. He raises up the needy from the earth and lifts up the poor out of the dunghill that He may place him with princes, with the princes of the people. If we abide faithful to the obligations of our new birth in Christ, it is solely because of the grace

of God. If violating those obligations we go into a strange country and at last return to Him, it is the grace of God that brings us back again. We can sin of ourselves but we cannot repent of ourselves. The grace of God is not only an illumination, it bears us along in the paths of righteousness if we only correspond with it. God respects the free will with which he has dowered us, and though he made us without ourselves He will not save us without ourselves. As a kind father guides and helps the uncertain steps of his little child so Our Heavenly Father deals with us during the whole course of our spiritual life. All He asks of us is the obedience of loving sons. And as He directs and helps us during life, so He will sustain you in the hour of death. "He crowns His own work in us," as St. Augustine says. If we endure to the end, prompt in hearing the suggestions of the Spirit of God, and punctual in carrying them out, God will give us the sovereign and crowning grace of a happy death in addition to all the other graces He has bestowed.

God wishes us all to be saved. God does all He may do to save us. If our salvation fails it will be simply and solely because we give no heed to His inspirations and refuse His help.

Remembering then, brethren, the Divine bounty

and solicitude on our behalf, let us be grateful, as the Apostle exhorts us. Let us always, as the Lesson for this day suggests, give thanks for the grace of God that is given to us in Jesus Christ. Let us do what we can to extend His Kingdom over the souls of men. Grieve not the Spirit of God, resist it not, quench it not, and one day we shall see in His glory Him in Whom we have believed, in Whom we have hoped, and Whom we have loved.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The series of exhortations to the Ephesians, from which to-day's Lesson is taken (as was also the Lesson for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost), may be summed in the words, "Be ye careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." This is the principle the Apostle lays down for all, both those who are beginners and those who are advanced in Christian perfection. We are members one of another, brethren in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must abstain from lying, stealing and anger, must speak the truth to them that live with us, give every brother his due, and abstain from indulgence in that passion which, beyond all others, gives to the devil the opportunity he desires of weak-

ening or even destroying within us, the spirit of brotherhood.

To understand the full force of the admonitions which the Church wants us to reflect upon to-day we must go back a little. The Apostle implores the Ephesians in the Lord's name not to walk any longer as senseless heathens in darkness and in guilt, devoid of the hope of future blessedness, and therefore given up to all manner of wicked enjoyment, but, rather, to live as beseems men who have received the truths made known by Jesus Christ — to resist the sinfulness and deceitful desires which all have inherited from Adam — "to put off the old man" with his vices and concupiscences, which duty was impressed upon them by the ceremony of laying aside their clothes when they were admitted to the rites of baptism. Then he goes on to exhort them to live as befits those who have been born again of water and the Holy Ghost — conformably to the will and law of God in true justice and holiness, fulfilling the various obligations towards their neighbors and preserving that purity of soul which renders them pleasing in the sight of God and man, and in a word, sedulously avoiding those evil passions which beseems not those who have once for all received the

grace of baptism. First of all, he bids them put away lying and speak the truth; for, says he, we are members one of another. As in the natural body the different members do not deceive or injure each other but, on the contrary, help and relieve each other, so ought it to be also in the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church. "Speak ye the truth, every man with his neighbor." The same words are found in the prophecy of Zachary. Lying shares with human respect the bad eminence of being the most cowardly of the vices. It certainly is the commonest of them. Let us try to realize the sinfulness of lying — even of what we like to call untruths, foolish lies, white lies, as opposed to lies which work injury to our neighbor either in his good name or his possessions. God is truth, and all offences against truth are contrary to the divine good pleasure. To tell a lie is to assert what we believe to be false with the intention of deceiving others. Every lie is intrinsically bad, and, therefore, it can never be lawful. No matter what the circumstances are, no matter if our own lives or the lives of our friends be at stake, one is never justified in lying. It is an act against the natural end and institution of speech, which was given to man by God to express his thoughts. Words are the signs of thoughts. When we use

a sign, not having in mind the thought for which it stands, but the contradictory to it, we are doing violence to the natural bond between the sign and the thing signified. And this is the fundamental reason why lying is everywhere and always wrong. Holy Scripture is hard on lying and liars. And those of us who indulge in "falsehoods," "untruths," and all that, will do well to take to heart the following warnings:

"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. A deceitful witness that uttereth lies, the Lord detesteth. A thief is better than a man that is always lying; but both of them shall inherit destruction. A lying witness shall perish. A lie is a blot on a man. Be not willing to make any matter of lie." Liars, together with murderers, adulterers and idolators, shall have their portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The wise man warns us that the mouth that belieth killeth the soul.

There are different sorts of lies, and though all are sinful they are not all equally sinful. The very worst is sacrilegious lie which is told in confession out of foolish fear or false shame, and which is a profanation of the Sacrament of reconciliation. Then come what are called malicious or injurious lies, because they are told for the purpose of making

trouble. Such lies are also called calumnies, and he who is guilty of them must repair the evil he has done, even at the expense of his own good name. Then comes what are called officious lies, namely, those which are told for a good purpose — to ward off from ourselves or from others something that is irksome or inconvenient. It ought not to be necessary to remind Catholics that it is never lawful to do evil that good may follow, which is one of the very first principles of Christian morals. Nor ought it to be necessary to warn them that swearing to a lie, calling upon God to witness the truth of what one knows to be falsehood, is the monstrous sin of perjury. No matter what or whose interests are at stake, once a man binds himself to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, he must do so or answer for his crime before the God of truth. Then comes what is called the jocose lie, one told only in jest — merely for the sake of fun. Usually it is only a venial sin, and often no sin at all. But cases arise when a jocose lie, not being understood as such, becomes a grave occasion of sin to one's neighbor. It may easily happen that a lie, told merely for fun, will lead to anger, quarreling and the sins that follow therefrom. The advise of the Wise Man. "Be not willing to make any manner of lie," is one that all ought to follow.

Brethren, make as the law of your lives henceforth the command of the Apostle touching the speaking of the truth. Put a watch over your mouths and a guard over your lips lest you utter lies. Watch your children and check any tendency you may notice in them toward indulging the miserable vice of lying. Don't justify your indulgence in officious or foolish lies on the ground that they were only venial sins. Remember that this is not the way to deal with God, and that he who despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

After reminding the Christians of Ephesus that by the charity of Christ they have been delivered from darkness and the shadow of death and made children of the light, he bids them shun the works of darkness and lead lives full of goodness and justice and truth, reproving the children of error and unbelief by the contrast of their own bright example and thereby giving glory to their Father who is in heaven. He exhorts them, in all their relations with unbelievers, to be prudent and cautious, lest their lives, instead of conducing to the edification of their holy faith, be a source of scandal to

their neighbors, and he warns them to make good use of their time despite the dangers and corruptions that surround them — avoiding in particular the vice of drunkenness.

Surely there are suggestions here that are of interest to us in these latter days. Like the Ephesians we live in the midst of a perverse generation of people who hate and despise the faith we profess, and who affect to judge the religion of Catholics by the conduct of Catholics.

"You," they tell us, when they see us given over to the unfruitful works of darkness, "you claim to be the salt of the earth, the children of light. Is it not written, 'By their fruits ye shall know them'? How much better are we, than you, with your priests, your Mass and your Sacraments? Are you juster, soberer, purer than we are, you who call yourselves an elect generation, the true followers of Christ? Go mend your ways before you presume to reproach us. If Catholicism means what your lives show it to mean, we will have none of it. A good tree ought to bring forth good fruit."

Brethren, it is not so much the assaults of open enemies that interfere with the progress of Mother Church, as the disorders of her own children. The world is not blind. It notes the sins that flourish

among us, our dissensions, our drunkenness, our lying, our shameless neglect of what we are supposed to regard as solemn duties, our cold-blooded indifference as to the religious training of our children, and it can hardly be blamed for its attitude towards the Catholic Church. Very many of us would be willing to fight, perhaps to die, for the faith; but we are not willing to live up to its requirements. Instead of being what we ought to be — the good odor of Christ — Apostles in our own humble way — showing the world by our pious lives how beautiful, how beneficent and perfect is this deathless faith of ours, we live as if we cared for none of these things. I venture to say that the sinful lives of Catholics do more to discredit our religion in the minds of outsiders than all the lies of all the wretches who make a living by villifying it. Brethren, let us arouse ourselves to the fact that the honor of Mother Church is in our keeping, and let us in word and in deed so behave ourselves that her enemies will find nothing in our conduct wherewith to reproach her. In all things, as the Apostle exhorts his beloved son, Titus, let us show ourselves examples of good works, so that our adversaries may be afraid, having no evil to say of us.

Then St. Paul exhorts us to make good use of our time. The past belongs to death; the future to

God; the present only is our own. Let us look upon each passing moment as an opportunity God has given us of doing good, an opportunity that once past is past forever. It was Our Lord who purchased *time,* and at a great price; and He purchased it for us that it might be employed by His faithful servants in promoting the glory of God. By most men it is squandered in sloth, folly and evil doing. But those who are united to Christ will redeem it; that is, they will make every instant of it an earnest tribute to their undiminished service. Let us get ourselves thoroughly imbued with these two leading thoughts of the Lesson for to-day. The beginning of a holy life, is to understand what is the will of God.

From general exhortations St. Paul comes down to a particular warning. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is luxury." The Apostle does not say do not drink wine. He reproves not the use but the abuse of it. Note the words, "Wherein is luxury." He who is filled with wine, says St. Jerome, has folly, frenzy, lasciviousness, lust — for all this I hold to be meant by the single word "luxury." It is hard to suppose that a drunkard can be chaste, and by the words of St. Paul it would appear to be revealed, at least by implication, that he cannot.

Brethren, some of us are accustomed to speak

of drunkenness not only without horror but laughingly. It is even the fashion in certain circles to speak of it as a good man's failing. But let us remember what St. Paul says about it. He ranks it among the sins that exclude men from the kingdom of God. "Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor the unnatural, nor thieves, nor covetors, nor *drunkards,* nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God." Men may come to look leniently upon drunkenness, but the truth of the Lord dwelleth forever.

Drunkenness is a sin and the fruitful parent of other sins. It is a sin for it reduces a man to the level of a brute for the time being. It deprives him of reason and leaves all the worst passions of his nature without any restraint. It reduces him to a state of self-inflicted insanity and mars the image of God in him, wherein lies its special malice. Perfect drunkenness, the signs of which are inability to distinguish between right and wrong; inability to remember what was done under the influence of drink; the doing of things which are altogether unusual, such as blaspheming, obscene talk and the making of disturbance in the home, is a mortal sin for the reason above given. Imperfect drunkenness, which does not take away the use of reason

but only diminishes it, though of itself a venial sin, is often a mortal sin, either by reason of the scandal which is given or by the injury done one's health or one's family; or, again, by the grief and confusion which it occasions to a man's wife, children or parents. "Who hath woe? Whose father hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of the eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine and study to drink off their cups." So speaks the Wise Man in the book of Proverbs, and his words are true to-day. Let those who are disposed to take a lenient view of drunkenness go to the drunkard's home and see the sorrow and privations which his wife and children endure. Look into the drunkard's conscience and mark how seared and callous it is. Why, he will often tell you that he is doing no harm to anyone — that he is not guilty of grievous sin, though night after night he sets his brain on fire, speaks wild, unreasoned language, squanders his wages and scandalizes his children. Even at the hour of death it is difficult to awaken in him a consciousness of the evil he has done. In view of all these things, is it not truly said that drunkenness reduces it votaries to the level of the brute?

It is the besetting sin of our people. It keeps

thousands of them in poverty and misery. It inflames their ardent natures, stirs them up to anger and insolence and blasphemy and impurity and sometimes even to murder. Children learn the vice by seeing their elders drinking, by being sent to barrooms to get refreshments for their thirsty parents, and by being encouraged to take a little — just for fun. Youths drink not because they like it but because they think it is the manly thing to do. And they end by liking it. Brethren, you know the evils, spiritual, moral and social, which follow from the monstrous vice of drunkenness. Guard against it as you love your souls, your homes and your families. It is the Scripture that warns you that a workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich; that drink hath destroyed very many; that they who drink to excess shall find bitterness of soul, and that finally they shall, according to the teachings of the Apostle, be shut out from the happiness of Heaven.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

St. Paul is usually represented in Christian art with a sword in one hand and the Scriptures in the other. And this, perhaps, is to remind us of one striking feature of his teaching. He takes up the

thought of Job, "The life of man upon earth is a warfare," and time and again insists on this idea. The Christian life presents itself to him as a spiritual conflict, between the followers of Christ on one hand and the power of evil — the world, the flesh and the devil — on the other. We are soldiers of God. We must war a good warfare. We must labor as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. We are to fight the good fight of faith and so lay hold on eternal life whereunto we are called. There is no middle ground for anyone. Our Lord has said: "He that is not with Me is against Me." The fight begins for every man with the dawn of his reason, and continues up to the last moment of his life. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, as the Apostle says to the Corinthians, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications and destroying comrades.

In the Lesson for this day, St. Paul warns the Ephesians of the necessity they are under as soldiers of Christ of providing themselves with suitable armor of defense and weapons of offence. But as arms without courage are useless, he first exhorts them to be strong in the Lord. "Without Me," says Our Lord, "you can do nothing," and he who looks for victory looks in vain, unless he be endowed with strength from on high. If the Lord

be our helper, we shall not fear. If God be with us who shall stand against us? "Put ye on the armor of God," says the Apostle, and as we read the verses which follow we feel the truth of St. Jerome's remark: "As often as I read St. Paul I seem to hear not words but peals of thunder." "Put ye on the armor of God," and the Apostle, having in mind the equipment of the Roman legionary with which he was painfully familiar, tells us in what this armor consists: First comes the belt, which was the most necessary portion of a soldier's outfit. Then the strong sandals which the soldier needed for the protection of his feet and without which he could not march. Then comes the strong shield which was carried on the left arm and which protected the whole body of the warrior. Then came the helmet for the protection of the head. Last of all came the strong short sword which was worn on the right side and which, in the hand of the Roman soldier, was a weapon of might.

Now for the spiritual application. First of all, just as the belt encircles and binds the body of a soldier, a sign of the fidelity to which he has pledged himself, so the Christian should gird himself with truth, that is to say, should, first of all, be faithful in keeping the engagements which he entered into at his baptism, and moreover, be sincere and truth-

ful in all his words, asserting only that which he knows to be true and promising only what he firmly purposes to perform. Then for a breastplate he must put on justice. The Christian's first duty is to speak the truth; the next is to do what is just before God and man. Justice is the general virtue of holiness, and as the breastplate defends the vital parts of the soldier, so will zeal for holiness preserve the soul and conscience of a Christian against sin. Then the feet of Christ's soldiers must be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace — that is to say, they should be ready and zealous to preach by word and example that religion which alone has effected peace and reconciliation between God and man. Writing to the Romans St. Paul says: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, of them that bring good tidings of glad things." All Christians must be prepared to walk in the way of the Gospel and by their holy life and conversation to bring others into the same way and thus advance the Kingdom of God. In the next place, as the legionary bore a shield to ward off the darts and arrows of his enemies, so the soldier of Christ must in the spiritual combat oppose to the fiery darts of the evil one, which are temptations, the considerations of the truths of faith, viz., the menaces and rewards which they

point out to us. St. James teaches the same thing when he warns that our adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion whom we are to resist, strong in faith.

The next part of the Christian panoply is the helmet of salvation, which, as the Apostle elsewhere tells us, is the "hope of salvation." The hope of future peace and confidence in the power and mercy of God to obtain it, shall support us in the midst of our enemies.

The weapon of offence, which the Christian must use in his spiritual warfare, is the sword of the spirit, which, according to the Apostle, is the Word of God, divinely revealed and made known to us through the Church. How potent a weapon that is against the devil is plain from the story of the temptation of Our Lord in the desert. To the first proposal of the evil one, Christ answered, "Not alone by bread doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." To the second He answered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To the third, when the Tempter offered Him as a reward for adoring him all the Kingdoms of the earth, he answered, "Begone, Satan, for it is written, 'The Lord thy God shall thou adore, and Him only shall thou serve,'" whereupon the devil left Him. But it must be care-

fully noted that the Word of God to prove a weapon against our spiritual enemies must be accepted by us in the sense attributed to it by the Church. The use of it, according to private interpretation, has filled the world with contentions, sects and unbelief, and has destroyed a countless multitude of souls.

Since, then, the Word of God is so useful to us we ought to be eager to familiarize ourselves with it, either by reading or by listening to the exposition of it. The need the faithful have of it is the reason of the obligation the ministers of religion are under of preaching it. Meditation on the Word of God roots out all vices and establishes all virtues. Moreover, familiarity with it enables us to confound the enemies of the faith.

All these arms are necessary because of the nature of our adversaries in the spiritual combat. Our enemies are not *men,* but Satan and his host, angels fallen, but still of angelic understanding, numerous, invisible, malicious, penetrating things around us, always on the lookout for a chance to overcome us.

And overcome us they will unless we are watchful and ready for battle, girded with the spiritual panoply of the soldier of Jesus Christ.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The faithful at Philippi had shown greater kindness to St. Paul while he was with them, and more than once after his departure had contributed to relieve his wants. Their liberality, as the Apostle hints, distinguished them above all other churches. They were firm in the faith when persecuted, they obeyed St. Paul cheerfully and appear to have been warmly attached to him. From his prison in Rome he addressed to them the Epistle from which this day's Lesson is taken — an Epistle in which there is more of praise and less of blame than in any other of his writings. He calls them his " joy and his crown " and tells them that one of his last wishes is to be with them once again and await in their company the day of the coming of the Lord. The only fault he found in them was a certain lack of charity which gave rise to sundry disputes and altercations. Wherefore we find him, at the very outset of the Epistle, praying God that the charity already manifested by their zeal in ministering to his needs may yet more abound in a thorough knowledge of all Christian truth and in a fuller appreciation of Christian duty to the end that they

may always live pure and blameless, not giving scandal to one another.

There appear to be at least two points of practical importance urged in this prayer of the Apostle. The first is that the children of the Gospel should prize the " word of life " as the dearest thing they possess. The second is that they should take care never to give scandal or cause of offence to their brethren. Charity rejoices in the truth. Again, though a man be ready to distribute all his goods to feed the poor, if, meanwhile he goes among his brethren sowing the seeds of bad example, his liberality will profit him nothing. The good he does to their bodies is far outweighed by the harm he works to their souls.

The first object of charity is God Who is truth and has no greater enemy than a lie. To make charity grow in the world the Apostles were unwearied in preaching divine truth and in repressing error wherever they found it. St. Paul looked upon false doctrine as the greatest of evils, which is evident from many passages in his Epistles. Now we ought to be actuated by a like love for truth and a like hostility to error. Although the world around us talks about freedom of thought — as if religion was after all a mere matter of opinion — and extends the same benevolent consideration to

error as to truth, we must beware of such notions. Every now and then one meets what is called a "liberal Catholic"—a man who insists that the Church is too unyielding in her attitude on doctrinal matters and who thinks that if some little concessions were made to the spirit of the age and the feelings of outsiders, these would flock into the fold. The "liberal Catholic" is usually a very ignorant person. If he knew anything at all of the nature of the Church and of her relation toward the deposit of faith he would understand that the programme he favors is quite impossible. The Church was founded to preach to the end of time the doctrines of Jesus Christ. That she might be enabled to fulfill her mission, Christ sent upon her the Spirit of Truth to abide with her always. Her teaching is, by reason of the divine help and guidance, infallible and unchanging, the same, yesterday, to-day and forever. She is not a human institution like the Protestant churches, which alter their creeds to suit the temper of the times. She can make no compromise with error. Her business is to resist and refute error. "Catholic intolerance" is supposed to be a violation of charity. But Catholic truth cannot be sacrificed to Catholic charity. Charity cannot oblige us to regard truth and error with equal favor. It inspires us with compassion

for those who do not belong to the faith, moves us to excuse their wrong notions as being held in good faith and prompts us to do all we can to convince them of the truth. But the charity which only tends to confirm a brother in his error is not the charity of Christ. Religious intolerance — not to be confounded remember with civil intolerance — which renders it impossible for the Church to come to terms with false doctrines and false churches, is a necessary consequence of her position as the depositary of absolute religious truth. The really intelligent Catholic knows that he has no right to an opinion against the faith — no more right than he has to think that two and two make three or five instead of four. The man who out of pride or human respect makes up his mind to think or believe the contradictory of what the Church teaches even in one point has already denied the faith and is a Protestant to all intents and purposes.

Charity then rejoices in the truth. If we love God we shall love the message which He has delivered to us by His only begotten Son. We shall try accordingly, to measure of our opportunity and capacity to familiarize ourselves with the contents of that message, we shall hold to it despite the scoffs and jeers of a perverse and wicked generation, we

shall not allow ourselves to be deprived of the peace and joy of believing, because of the difficulties with which men seek to confound us, we shall not sacrifice one jot or tittle of Catholic doctrine for the sake of the good-will of outsiders, we shall not be liberal with what does not belong to us, but which is a trust to be handed down intact to generations yet to come.

The other point suggested by the words of the Apostle is this — that we must, as we are bound to love our brother, abstain from all words and actions which may scandalize him — put him in danger of eternal death. We are bound as brethren to administer fraternal correction just as we are bound to advise a man whom we see walking into bodily peril. On the other hand, just as common sense and common humanity command us to abstain from all acts fraught with peril to our neighbor's bodily welfare, so with greater reason, seeing that the life of the soul is more precious than the life of the body, we are bound to abstain from all proceedings which may occasion his falling into sin. Each of us is his brother's keeper to an extent which few realize. We have only to look into our consciences to know the awful potency of bad example. As we have suffered from scandal given to us, let us be careful lest others suffer from scandal given by us.

For God will require the soul of our brother at our hands. If on looking over the past we find that we have helped the devil to do his work, let us heartily repent, make that repentance as effective as we can, and endeavor henceforth by our holy lives to bring to God at least as many as we led away from Him while servants of sin.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

You may remember, brethren, from last Sunday's Lesson that St. Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians hints that there was some little lack of charity among them. Certain of them, he says, "out of contention preach Christ not sincerely"— that is from corrupt motives. In the last chapter he returns to this painful subject and makes an appeal to those of them who were at fault — the ladies Syntyche and Evodia. It appears that they had rendered great service to religion in the Church at Philippi. Some misunderstanding, however, had arisen between them — for pious people are human — to the scandal of the faithful. He entreats them to give up their differences and to live in peace and concord for the sake of the Lord. "I beg of Evodia and I beseech Syntyche to be of one

mind in the Lord." There is a suggestion here which surely is as practical to-day as when it was written. We are one in the faith, but this is not enough. We must, as the Apostle tells his converts at Ephesus, be careful to so keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. To unity of belief we must join the practice of concord and union of heart. Faith and brotherly charity must go hand in hand. The children of the Church to-day should imitate the example of the first believers, of whom it is said in the Acts of the Apostles that they had but one heart and one soul. The contrary course gives occasion to outsiders to blaspheme against our religion. "For," they urge, "did not Christ say to His followers, 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another'? And how can the spirit of love abide amid envies and contentions? If you Catholics are the only true followers of Christ, as you claim, why do you not keep His word? Did He not declare that every good tree bringeth forth good fruit and every evil tree evil fruit — that the tree is known by its fruit?" Of course the answer to taunts like this is easy enough. The evil life of some Catholics is no argument against the claims of the Catholic Church. Her children, if bad, are bad not because of the Church, but in spite of the Church. At the

same time we should so live that no man may be able to convict us of sin, may find anything of evil wherewith to reproach us.

The spirit of contention, brethren, is not a Christian spirit. It is born of selfishness and of pride. And, wherever it flourishes, whether in families or among neighbors, peace is a stranger. It is natural for us to be enamored of our opinions and eager to have them accepted by others. We are fond of them as parents are of their children. It tickles our vanity to have them approved. It is a humiliation to have them disapproved, for the man who disapproves seems thereby to assume a superiority of knowledge or judgment over us. And these natural tendencies are intensified if men have been brought up in any opinion, or if certain worldly advantages have contributed to make them positive and stiff. To contradict opinionated people is to exasperate them. They look upon a man who presumes to do so as an invader of their rights. No good, but rather much harm, is done by opposing the views of such persons. It is quite true that it is a charity to our neighbor to disabuse him of his errors. But, unless we are quite sure that the opinion we condemn is really an error, unless in addition we are quite sure we are actuated, not by the spirit of contention, but by desire of our neighbor's

good, unless, furthermore, the error is of such consequence as to be prejudicial to our neighbor if he persists in it and unless, finally, there is good prospect of success, we shall do far more service to charity by silence than by speech.

The course we ought to follow in dealing with our neighbor's opinions is a very simple one. Treat him as you would like him to treat you. Remember that, after all, you yourself may be wrong. Do not assume that wisdom will perish with you. If you feel bound to oppose his inclinations or to question his views, or to maintain sentiments which are distasteful to him, do so with the same kindly consideration which you would demand from him in a like case. No man relishes being treated as if he were a nobody. No man likes to be taunted with stupidity because he cannot see things as you see them, nor does he submit gracefully to scornful looks or gestures. Beware of contradicting with too much heat. Wrath kindles wrath. Christian moderation is violated and our neighbor is provoked to a more obstinate resistance.

Avoid, then, brethren, indiscreet zeal in opposing men's opinions — do not abound too much in your own sense. Show a decent respect for the intelligence and temper of those with whom you are thrown into contact. Agree to disagree if further

agreement seems impossible, otherwise peace and charity will suffer, while disputes and animosities will flourish. Be not wise in your own conceit; be not capricious; avoid unseasonable and aggressive candor; in short, as the Apostle exhorts, "have peace with all men." For just as in the body there are many members each having its office and all working together for the good of the whole, neither opposing one another nor hating one another, but mutually careful one for another, so we, the children of the Church, who form one body of which Christ is the head, should live together in harmony, abounding in charity unto the glory and praise of God, doing nothing through contention or vainglory, but standing forth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation as the blameless and sincere children of God. Thus doing you will enjoy that peace which is both the greatest of earthly joys and a foretaste of the perfect peace that awaits you in the kingdom of God.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The lesson appointed for to-day's Mass is taken from one of that group of Epistles in which St. Paul deals with the "mystery of the last things,"

with death and the things that follow death, judgment and "the wrath to come." The belief was widely prevalent in St. Paul's lifetime, and the Apostle himself does not seem to have escaped from the merely practical error it involved, that Our Lord's Second Advent was close at hand. It may puzzle us at first to find an Apostle wholly in the dark on a point of this kind, and the difficulty is apparently not lessened when we recall that this was the very Apostle who was caught up into the third heaven and heard and saw there things which it is not given to man to utter. But, after all, the *time* of Our Lord's Second Coming was never revealed; not the Angels themselves were to know that; only the Son of Man. Conjectures, therefore, as to its nearness or remoteness, even when indulged in by an Apostle, are entirely outside the sphere of faith and morals.

The lesson which St. Paul draws for those first converts of his in Thessalonica loses none of its point, because the mystery on which it depended was, as we know now, far off. In one sense it was never far off; nor is it far off from us to-day. The "wrath to come," from which we are delivered by Our Lord, is, of course, the general judgment, the day of final reckoning, when Our Lord and His ideals are to be justified in the sight of all men. A

day of such readjustment is necessarily conceived of as a day of God's anger against the unbelieving portion of mankind, a day on which the lies, the sophistries, the false views of life and conduct and destiny, current in a world where few "walk by faith," would be burned up in the unquenchable fire of the divine condemnation. It is not in ordinary, unreflecting human nature to keep the thought of such a day prominently in the forefront of the mind. We are too prone either to forget it altogether, or to thrust it back into one of the dark corners of the soul as an uncomfortable or disconcerting truth, a something that interferes with the "will to live," the propensity, that is, to be our natural, unregenerate selves, rather than the "higher self," which is the Christ within each one of us. "Little children," says St. Paul, "how am I straitened until Christ be formed in you?" Our Lord is born in us through faith in baptism, but His full stature, the perfect man, is not reached save by strenuous effort, by virtue, and especially by daily growth in charity. To try to grow into that "perfect man" is "to live by faith," to "walk in newness of life," as St. Paul so frequently reminds us; but we are disposed, most of us, to forget that baptism has not only made it possible, but has created a very grave obligation in all Christians to realize it.

The Day of Judgment seems a long way off; death and our own particular judgment do not loom too distinctly on the horizon of our life. God sits up in heaven and He seems to be strangely silent. The world goes on; the many seek their own selfish ends; and the Catholic, who moves through it all, is tempted to forget; but every now and then the Church lifts that old cry of warning — the "wrath to come." Who shall deliver us from that?

We are accustomed, and rightly so, to think of Our Lord's religion as something gracious and sweet. In Him, justice and mercy have kissed each other, and religion is without terror in consequence. That is all very true, and we bless God for it; but there is an austere side to religion even as preached by Our Blessed Lord. We hear it in this very warning about the "wrath to come." It sounded clear and distinct in the rebuke of His great Forerunner when the Sadducees and Pharisees went out to hear Him preach. "Ye generations of vipers," he cried, "who hath taught you to flee from the wrath to come?" It is the very same cry Our Lord Himself raises. He judges not yet; but He will judge one day. He came once in lowliness and He went away in apparent defeat; but His Second Advent will be in majesty and power, not merely in His resurrection, but in His judgment. He will

deliver His elect on that day, for His wrath will be as a winnowing fan to separate the just from the unjust; His word will be as a flame of fire in which all the deeds that men have done in the flesh will be tested.

We said a moment ago that that day of wrath is never far off. When life is over eternity begins, and in eternity there is neither yesterday nor to-morrow, but only to-day. Our fate there is fixed forever when the soul has once passed through the shadow of the valley of death. And so we not only may, but we *ought,* to understand the Apostle's words about the "wrath to come," as containing a warning about our particular judgment at the moment of death. Are we ready to face that? Unless we are we shall find it an "hour of the exceeding wrath of God."

But even before the awful lighting comes which death flashes clear and pitilessly on the soul, God's wrath makes itself felt. We are not speaking of those sudden visitations in which divine vengeance seems to overtake the world and cut it off in its sin. Who knows the mind of God? "Who hath been his counselor?" We may not say with certainty that every great calamity caused by the unexpected outbreak of the physical forces of nature in flood, or fire, or earthquake, is a divine punishment on the

sins of men. "He maketh His rain to fall on the just and the unjust." He has given us no criterion by which we may test the secret condition of the heart. Wickedness often has its way in this world. It flourishes like the green bay tree. It wins success; it often escapes detection. God sits up in heaven, as we said; He is perplexingly silent. We must not pretend to read His mind in the play of the forces or agents of His material universe. When we say, therefore, that His wrath is near at hand even before death, we mean that His judgment often speaks in the inner tribunal of conscience. In that secret assize of the soul He sits as Judge while His servant, the human Conscience, speaks. No deed of wickedness goes unnoticed there. We speak of a seared conscience and a sleeping conscience. We doubt much if they exist. "The wicked are never at rest"; they "flee when no man pursueth." The still small clamor of unallayed remorse, the "worm that dieth not, the flame that is not extinguished," torture of that kind is not reserved only for the other life. That, too, is the wrath of God. How shall we flee from it? It is faith in Our Lord, fidelity to His Commandments, obedience to the living voice of His Church, the clean heart that sees Him always, the humble mind that waits upon His promises and spurns the idols of this world, the liv-

ing charity of an upright Catholic life — it is this that delivers us from "the wrath to come." And so we may understand the Apostle's words in a threefold, and very real sense, of the general judgment at the last day, of our own special judgment at the moment of death, and of the particular judgment of conscience on every deliberate word, thought, or deed, which is not in harmony with the law of Christ as revealed to us through His holy and infallible Church.

SECOND SUNDAY OF NOVEMBER

The parable of the mustard seed foretells the rapid growth of the Church and its universality. The points of comparison are easily seized. The seed sown is very small. It was among the Jews proverbially the least significant seed, expressing something extremely minute. It grows up to a height quite out of proportion and becomes, although not a large tree among trees, still larger than others of the class to which it belongs, so as to be rather a tree than an herb. It puts out branches and in those branches and under its shade the birds of the air are content to dwell.

The first question raised as to the parable is that which relates to the image here used by Our Lord.

It is not quite certain that the plant of which He speaks is that which we now call the mustard plant, but which in our country does not grow to any considerable size. There is in the East a plant which is said to resemble mustard in everything and which attains a growth of which we do not dream in our own colder latitudes, sometimes such as will allow a man to climb into the branches or to ride on horseback under them. Maldonatus, the prince of commentators on the Gospels, tells us that in Spain he has seen large ovens heated with the branches; and afterwards he noted, when the seed was ripening, great flocks of birds congregating upon the boughs which could sustain the weight without breaking. All this was familiar enough to Our Lord's hearers and presented a lively image to their minds, and He may have pointed to a patch of just such mustard trees.

Our Lord does not choose this particular plant to represent the Church or the Kingdom of Heaven, because there are no trees of larger size, but because in this particular case the seed is very small and the growth very large in comparison; now the Church was, when He left at His ascension, but an almost imperceptible germ in the midst of the great world. Its adherents were very few; its members were without influence, station, repute and power.

An enemy of our Lord such as Caiaphas or Annas might have said to himself, within a few days of Pentecost, that the evil seed sown by the Nazarene Prophet had been trampled under foot. Nay, when they found the Apostles had been preaching the Resurrection of Christ, they thought it was enough to scourge them, and forbid them to preach any more. They had no notion that the doctrine of Him whom they had crucified possessed any power of spreading itself and of gaining a hold on the world. As with the Jews so also with the Romans. The preaching and the miracles of the Apostles gave the Romans no concern. The religion of Christ was not worth meeting on its own ground, the ground of argument; it was quite enough to treat it as a detestable superstition and to throw its adherents to the wild beasts of the amphitheater. It was growing rapidly and filling the world, and yet it was despised. But the time came when its greatness could not be gainsaid. The rulers of the world began to see that there was in the Church an influence which might be a help to themselves. They began to see that the Church made men the best citizens and that the public service was never so safe as in the hands of those who lived up to its teachings. A few centuries passed away and we see the successor of the poor Jewish fisherman, Peter, ruler in the city of

the Cæsars and exercising spiritual jurisdiction over more millions than ever bowed beneath the imperial scepter. One by one the nations entered into the fold of Christ, till now from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same the clean oblation, of which the last of the prophets of Israel spoke, is offered up to the King of the ages, immortal and invisible, the Gospel is preached in every tongue under heaven, the prediction of our God has come true.

Now, brethren, what ought our sentiments to be when we remember that we are members of this wonderful church of Christ. We ought to be grateful to God, who has made us inheritors of the faith delivered to the saints, and we ought to be proud of our dignity as Catholics. We ought so to live as to bring honor to the faith we possess, remembering always that the honor of the Church is more or less in our keeping. The world is scandalized by the disorders it too often sees among us — by our dissensions, by our indifference to our duties as Catholics, by our intemperance, our lying and our profanity. The world is not blind.

Let us call to mind what our Lord said in his parable of the cockle amid the wheat. The cockle is a figure of those who are blots on the fair field of the Church. He will allow it to grow till the harvest and in the time of the harvest, He shall send his

Angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

The parable of the mustard-seed suggests another lesson — that of looking out for small faults. They are to be feared because they lead to great sins. We become accustomed to sins of slight moment and in the end easily yield to faults of greatest moment. A single spark may start a great fire and the Holy Scripture warns us that he who despiseth small things shall fall by little and little. The devil is satisfied at the beginning with small victories over us. If we resist the tempter as to small sins he will not venture to suggest to us greater ones. He knows that they who are faithful in small matters will likewise be faithful in greater ones. Beware then of what we are pleased to consider trifling faults. They deprive us of fervor. They cool our love for God Who, perhaps, to punish us will permit us to fall into sins of the blackest kind.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

St. Paul invites the Colossians to give thanks to God the Father, Who hath, he says, delivered them from the kingdom of darkness and brought them

into the kingdom of His beloved Son, which is the Church of Christ. This exhortation of the Apostle ought to wake a responsive chord in the hearts of every one of us who share in the lot of the believers at Colossæ. Let us consider to-day, brethren, the blessings of faith and grace which, by the mercy of God, we possess as members of His Church. Our appreciation of these blessings is by no means as deep as it ought to be. Usually we look upon them as matters of course. Brought up, as it were, in the bosom of the Church, and, knowing nothing of the spiritual troubles of those who are tossed about on the pathless sea of error and are carried about hither and thither by every wind of doctrine, we are at peace. Home means one thing to the youth who has grown weary of its familiar joys and its gentle restraints and the love that inspires them all. It means far more to the waif that never knew a father's care or a mother's affection.

The Catholic Church to which we belong was founded by the Son of God to continue His mission among men, by transmitting His doctrine and the means of salvation which He brought to mankind, even to the latest generations. She forms a mighty kingdom, not indeed of this world, but in it, counting her subjects in all lands and having for her aim the training of men for the life to come, eternal in

the heavens. And she prepares us for that life by preaching to us the doctrine of Christ, by ministering to us the means of divine grace appointed by Christ and by imposing on us certain precepts in the interest of our spiritual advancement. We are accustomed to call her "Mother Church," for the reason that we receive through her the Grace of God which is the true life of the soul and because she trains us to holiness as a mother trains her little ones. And that she might be enabled to fulfill the high commission entrusted to her, her Founder sent upon her the Spirit of Truth to abide with her all days and to maintain in its primal purity and integrity that faith which all must accept under penalty of eternal condemnation. Without her pale men are vainly trying as they have vainly tried since the nations departed from God, to solve the great problems of human nature and human destiny. Only He who made us can supply a satisfactory answer to these problems, and He speaks to us by the voice of His church which He has constituted the teacher of mankind. From her lips we receive those doctrines which give a meaning to life and illuminate the mystery of death. She tells us that we were made for heaven; she points out the path thither; she holds out to us with lavish hands the helps to enable us to walk therein; and if we fall

by the way, she possesses and administers to us the means of renewed spiritual health and strength. She meets us at the threshold of life and in the saving waters of baptism imparts to us a new birth in Christ. She strengthens us to fight the good fight of faith against the enemies of our salvation by conferring upon us the Sacrament of the Christian soldier. She gives to us for the nourishment of our souls the Bread of life. She consoles the sinner by the Sacrament of penance. She watches over the bedside of her dying children and prepares them for their journey through the dark valley and when they have departed she still keeps them in loving memory. She supports us amid the sorrows and troubles of life, by reminding us that the God who feeds the ravens, hath a care for us His children also; that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be the lot of those who endure in faith and patience, and that in our home we shall find rest and peace and joys such as it has not entered into the mind of man to receive. Men talk much now-a-days of the struggle of class against class and of schemes for bettering social conditions. She alone has the secret for which philosophers are blindly groping, and she proclaims that the only remedy is a return to the

principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ — that no plans for social reforms will ever avail which ignore the great command of brotherly charity.

To us by the mercy of God has been given the privilege of membership in this glorious Church. How do we appreciate this privilege? Are we faithful to the obligations it entails, or do we live like those who have not known the light? Do we realize that the honor of the Church is, to a certain extent, in our keeping? Do we try, according to the measure of our capacity and opportunities, to familiarize ourselves with the doctrines and her discipline so as to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us to those who are seekers after truth? Are we proud to belong to the Church of Christ, or do we, out of human respect, stoop to apologize for the faith of our fathers which ought to be regarded as our most precious heritage? Do we accept all her teachings without question or reserve, remembering that she speaks to us in the name and by the authority of the Spirit of Truth, or are we disposed to set up our own views against those teachings? Do we realize that to ensure our salvation it is not enough to belong to the Church, but that we must, under pain of sharing the fate of the heathen and the publican, be dutiful children of the Church — making her word a principle of

action? These are some of the thoughts which, brethren, I would press upon your attention today. It is not enough to be Catholics. God is indeed good, but He demands that we be good also. We have been called to the inheritance of the Sons of God. Let us remember the duties of sonship. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God. Let us fulfill the duties of citizenship. We have been enrolled as Soldiers of Christ. Let us remember the fate of deserters. We have received the virtue of faith. Let us remember that faith without works is dead even as a body without the soul is dead, and that as Jesus Christ has said, not everyone that confesses Him as Lord shall enter into the happiness of Heaven, but only those who do His will and the will of the Father Who sent Him.

THE END

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